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SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS

AND

OCCASIONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By GEORGE FOTHERGILL, D. D.
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Preached at St. *Mary*'s at *Oxford*, at the Aſſizes, on *Thurſday, March* 6, 1734-5. And publiſhed at the Requeſt of Mr. Vice-Chancellor, and the Heads of Houſes.

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SERMON

Preached at

St. *MARY*'s in *OXFORD*,

AT THE

ASSIZES

On *Thurſday*, *March* 6*th*. 1734-5.

The FIFTH EDITION.

Genesis XX. 11.

And Abraham *ſaid, Becauſe I thought, Surely the Fear of* GOD *is not in this Place; and They will ſlay me for my Wife's Sake.*

"THAT the *General Belief* and *Publick Acknowledgment* of thoſe great Principles of *Religion*, the *Being* of a GOD and His *Providence*, are neceſſary to ſecure the Order and Happineſs of *Civil Societies*," is an Opinion confirmed by the united Suffrage of the Thinking Part of Mankind in all former Ages. Not only the *Advocates* for Religion, after having eſtabliſhed its Truth, generally inſiſt on its Importance to Men's Social Intereſts: But its very *Enemies* have been forced to give us ſuch Accounts of its Original and Propagation, as plainly imply a Confeſſion, that the *Belief* of it has always been thought neceſſary, to deceive Mankind into a Compliance with the Rules of Virtue, and a Participation of the Benefits of Society.

This Opinion however, while ſuffered to keep Poſſeſſion, muſt needs be a conſiderable Prejudice againſt all Attempts in Favour of *Irreligion*. Accordingly Some of thoſe, who, in this Age of *Doubting*, have diſcovered an Inclination leſs favourable to Religion and every Thing related to it, have (conſiſtently enough) endeavoured to remove this Obſtruction. Hence, as it ſhould ſeem, we have been entertained with Calculations of the Effects of *Theiſm*, *Scepticiſm*, and even *Atheiſm*, upon *Moral Goodneſs*: And the ſame Perſons, who have pleaded for ſubjecting the moſt *ſacred* Truths to the Teſt of *Raillery* and *Ridicule*, have alſo propoſed it as a Problem, "Whether an *Atheiſt* may not poſſibly be a Man of *Virtue* and *Merit?*" ſhewing a Willingneſs at leaſt to anſwer it in the *Affirmative*. And, ſhould *Speculations* of this Kind be thought harmleſs Amuſements only, of refined and contemplative Heads; yet our own Obſervation, I fear, may but too fully convince us, that *Something more than Amuſement* has been the Conſequence of them. *Unconcernedneſs* about Religious Principles in general ſeems to have been for ſome Time ſucceeding into the Place of (what uſed to be accounted) *a juſt Abhorrence* of Infidelity and Atheiſm. Our late *Pretenders to Free-Thinking* have indeed, for the moſt part, choſen *avowedly* to attack *Revealed Religion* only; and even in *ſuch* their Attempts the Intereſts of the *Publick* may perhaps be found by no means ſlightly concerned. But 'tis well-known alſo, that the Arguments they have *generally* employed for that Purpoſe are calculated to carry their deluded Followers *ſtill farther*. And there is great Cauſe to believe, that thoſe Perſons, whom ſuch Cavils are ſufficient to *remove from the Faith of the Goſpel*, very rarely ſtop ſhort of *a Diſbelief* of, at leaſt an *Indifference* towards, *all Religion* whatſoever.

It is therefore become but too ſeaſonable, and will not, I truſt, be thought wholly improper on this Publick and Solemn Occaſion, to reconſider the Subject above-mentioned: — to enquire, Whether the general Acknowledgement and Influence of Religious Principles be *really* of ſo much Importance to ſecure the *Morals* and *Good Order*, and (which I will here *ſuppoſe* to be connected with Theſe) the *Happineſs* of Societies, as has been commonly imagined? That, if it ſhould upon Enquiry appear to be ſo, we may reflect, before it be too late, What Conſequences may be juſtly apprehended, ſhould a Diſregard for Religion and Things ſacred make any farther Advances amongſt us.

The Reaſoning of the Patriarch in the Text is on many Accounts remarkable to the preſent Purpoſe. — *Abraham* appears, from this Hiſtory of Him (the *Antiquity* of which at leaſt our Adverſaries muſt give us Leave to inſiſt on) to have been one of the moſt illuſtrious Perſonages in ancient Times. By ſojourning in ſeveral different Countries, he had Opportunities of making himſelf acquainted with the Manners and Sentiments of ſeveral different Kinds of People; and This too at a Time, when the Condition of Mankind approached much nearer, than it has ſince done, to that *State of Nature,* with which ſome late Writers would be thought to be ſo familiarly converſant. — And what was the Reſult of the Obſervations of a Perſon ſo well qualified to make them with Advantage? Why; That *the fear of God* is the only effectual Check upon Men's Luſts and Paſſions: And that where any Country is ſuppoſed deſtitute of the Influences of this Principle, there is no Immorality,

morality, no Villany, no Barbarity, which may not juſtly *there* be dreaded. This was the Concluſion which the Patriarch drew from his Acquaintance with Mankind. From this he reaſoned, and upon this he acted, as an unqueſtionable Truth. — *And* Abraham *ſaid, Becauſe I thought, Surely the Fear of GOD is not in this Place; and They will ſlay me for my Wife's Sake.*

The *Fear of GOD*, to which *Abraham* here ſuppoſed the People of *Gerar* to be Strangers, muſt be underſtood to be the ſame Principle by which himſelf was actuated, and concerning which he had been in an eminent Manner *taught of GOD*. We have indeed all the Proof that ſuch an Affair will admit of, that the Religion of all Nations, when traced up to its Original, was *Revealed*. But it is evident, that the Religion of *Abraham* was directly and immediately *ſuch*. — It will not then ſeem foreign to the Import of my Text, if Occaſion be taken from thence to repreſent to You, not only,

I. *Firſt*, The *Importance* of *Religious* Principles in *general* to *National Virtue* and *Happineſs*; But,

II. *Secondly*, The *Excellency* of Thoſe of *Revealed Religion* in *particular* to this Purpoſe; And then

III. *Thirdly*, Some of thoſe uſeful *Inferences* that moſt naturally reſult from the foregoing Conſiderations.

I. *Firſt* then; The Importance of *Religion* to *Morality* may be illuſtrated Two Ways: By enquiring — "Whether, on the Suppoſition of *no Religion*, there *could* be, in *Reaſon*, any proper *Obligation* to Moral Virtue?" — Or, "Whether, on the *ſame* Suppoſition, there *would* be, in *Fact*, any effectual *Inducement* to It?"

It will be little to our preſent Purpoſe to conſider this Point in the *Former* View. Whatever be determined concerning any ſuppoſed *Obliging Power* of Moral Conſiderations, ſeparately from thoſe of Religion; Yet the Order and Happineſs of Societies, I mean, as far as the *Natural Tendency* of Things is concerned, are immediately affected, not by what Men's Behaviour *ought to be*, but by what it is in fact *found to be*. The moſt uſeful Method of treating this Point therefore ſeems to be to enquire, not how Men's *Obligations*, but how their *Actions*, will be influenced by Religion or by the Want of it. The Enquiry is by this Means brought from the Bar of *abſtract Reaſoning* to the more obvious and more convincing Deciſion of *Fact* and *Experience:* And from conſidering, What *has been* hitherto obſerved concerning Human Nature, we ſhall be beſt able to judge, What *may* at all Times *hereafter* in the ſame Circumſtances be expected from it.

But here we meet with very different Accounts, even among Thoſe who ſeem agreed in ſlighting the Proviſions of Religion. If we will believe ſome great Pretenders to a deep Inſight into theſe Matters, *Man* is a Being by Nature wild, unſociable, ſuſpicious, treacherous, malevolent. Others, perhaps out of an Abhorrence of ſuch a View of Human Nature, have given us Repreſentations of it very different from the foregoing one, and in ſome Reſpects from Thoſe of each other: Whilſt ſome of them ſpeak of Man as if He were Nothing but *pure Intelligence*, ſolely conducted by Truth and Rectitude; and others, as if He were All *good Affection*, ſufficiently actuated by kind Inſtincts, and a Love of Virtue for Virtue's Sake.

The Truth, I conceive, lies between the Two Opinions, which I will venture to call, *Extremes*. Human Nature is neither ſo baſe and odious a Thing as the One would make us believe; nor will Experience juſtify the flattering Accounts given us of it by the other. Every good-natured Man *feels* the Injuriouſneſs of the Former Repreſentation: And we need go no farther than to ſuch Solemnities as Theſe for a full Confutation of the Latter.

Man, conſidered in the Views of *mere Philoſophy*, (and in that Manner only the Perſons we are here contending with will permit us to conſider him) may be allowed to be by Nature endowed with ſuch Faculties as direct, and ſuch Diſpoſitions as incline, him to aſſociate with Thoſe of his own Species; and to be, as by the Former enabled, ſo by the Latter excited, to promote the Happineſs of ſuch Aſſociations when made. But then it muſt be remembered, that theſe Faculties, theſe Diſpoſitions, as far as they are *Natural* to Man, are *Faculties* and *Diſpoſitions only*. To reduce them to *Acts*, there muſt be Willingneſs and Choice; but to improve them into *Habits*, Care and Cultivation are farther neceſſary. And, after all, ſhould our diſcerning Faculties prove liable to be obſcured and perverted by

Powers of a different Tendency, and our Social Affections to be checked and reſtrained by others of a Private Nature: it is plain, if we ſit down contented with ſurveying only the *bright Side* of Human Nature, and from contemplating what ſuch a Creature *may be*, conclude what he generally *will be*; We ſhall frame a very *partial* Conception concerning that Nature, and may find ourſelves much diſappointed in our Expectations from it.

The Suppoſitions I have been juſt hinting are by no Means merely *imaginary*. Let us leave our Speculations, and follow Man into common Life, and we ſhall ſoon find each of them but too ſadly verified. The firſt Appearance that will offer itſelf to our View, may probably be that of the moſt uſeful Faculties weakened, and the moſt generous Affections overpowered, by craving Appetites, impetuous Luſts, and head-ſtrong Paſſions; and (which is ſtill worſe) *perverted*, and rendered ſubſervient to Purpoſes moſt prejudicial to Publick Welfare. The Avarice and Ambition of ſome, the Peeviſhneſs and Reſentfulneſs of others, the Laſciviouſneſs and Luſts of ſtill more, meeting with the like Propenſities in other Men, would ſoon, if permitted to operate according to their Natural Tendencies, render this World a Scene of Confuſion, Diſtraction, and Deſolation. Man, when under the Dominion of his Paſſions, has ever been obſerved to be one of the moſt dangerous, moſt deſtructive, of Creatures. Even thoſe very Powers, which, when rightly applied, give him a juſt Preeminence over the whole Animal Creation, ſerve only, under ſuch a perverſe Management, to render him more artful in contriving, and more ſucceſsful in accompliſhing, the moſt miſchievous Deſigns.

What is it then which, *at preſent*, reſtrains Mankind from theſe Ravages, this Deſtruction of each other? — This is an Enquiry, about which thoſe Perſons are particularly concerned to give us ſome Satisfaction, who imagine they can ſufficiently provide for the Government of the *Moral* World (as ſome of their Forefathers pretended to have done with Regard to the *Natural)* without taking into their Schemes the Belief of a *GOD*, and a *Providence*. And a Variety of Expedients will, no Doubt, be aſſigned for this Purpoſe. Great Streſs will be laid on the Powers of *Reaſon*; greater ſtill on the more active Principle of *Benevolence:* and mighty Things will by others be aſcribed to a Senſe of *Honour:* Whilſt thoſe who give us the moſt diſadvantageous

Accounts of Human Nature, refer us, for a ſufficient Security of our Perſons and Properties, to the Dread of the *Civil Magiſtrate.*— Let us ſee then, What might ordinarily be expected from *Any* or *All* of theſe, ſhould we be prevailed on to part with (what we have been uſed to account the Foundation and Support of each of them) the *Fear of GOD.*

Reason, as far as it is a Part of our Nature, has already been obſerved to be a *Faculty only*; and muſt, to make it ſerve to any good Purpoſe, be carefully cultivated, and regularly employed. Give me Leave then for once to *ſuppoſe* this Faculty to be thus cultivated, thus employed, without either ſetting out in its Enquiries with a Senſe of Religion, or arriving at the Diſcovery in the Progreſs of them. And what will be the Reſult with regard to Societies? Why, we are to expect many curious Diſquiſitions upon the Nature of a *Syſtem*; upon the Proportion which the *Parts* of ſuch Syſtem bear to the *Whole*; and, in ſhort, upon the Reaſonableneſs, that each Member of a Community ſhould refer his Aims and Purſuits, and even ſacrifice his *Private* Advantage, to the *General* Good. But, to ſpeak freely, Whatever may be ſaid for a

Member of Society's ſacrificing his own Private Intereſts to thoſe of the Publick; this muſt (I ſuppoſe) be underſtood of *ſuch* Private Intereſts only, as make no Part of his *Ultimate* Happineſs. For ſure it muſt ever be extremely difficult, if not impoſſible, to perſuade any Man, at leaſt on the Foot of *Reaſon*, to give up his own *Final* Intereſts for any Conſideration whatſoever. Whereas, without the Suppoſition of a *Deity*, every Good we are poſſeſſed of may be our *Ultimate Good*; every Intereſt we can forego may prove our *Final Intereſt*. What a Damp then muſt *Atheiſm*, or even *Scepticiſm*, caſt upon all *Generous* Sentiments! How heavily muſt all *Publick* Deſigns proceed, when the Conductors of them *have not in all their Thoughts* that Being, who alone can, in Caſe of *preſent* Interference, *Bid Self-Love and Social be* finally *the ſame*.

But, in Truth, we need not ſtay to enquire, What our Rational Faculties would direct, on the Suppoſition before us. If the united Ties of *Reaſon* and *Religion*, are ſo unable to confine Men poſſeſſed with the *Legion* of diſorderly *Affections*, as we too often find them to be; How eaſily would Men *break the Bonds* of Reaſon only *in ſunder!* With how little

Concern would they *caſt away its Cords from them!* Indeed, Who would *in this Caſe* think it worth while to collect the Dictates, or to hearken to the Voice, of Reaſon? Men that can be contented to [a] *have no Hope, to be without GOD in the World,* muſt have anticipated the Inſenſibility they expect for their Final Portion; or, however, they will, *in Courſe,* ſoon abandon the Care of the *Rational,* and deliver themſelves up to a merely *Animal Life.* Why ſhould a Man take much fruitleſs Pains, to *increaſe his Sorrow* by *increaſing his Knowledge*; or to cultivate a Faculty, the Improvement of which could at beſt ſerve only to render him more ingenious in *diſquieting himſelf in vain?*

The Truth is briefly This. — The Faculty of Reaſon, when regularly conſulted and faithfully followed, will always lead us to the Acknowledgement of a *Deity,* and own itſelf to be His Gift, [b] *who teacheth us more than the Beaſts of the Earth, and maketh us wiſer than the Fowls of Heaven:* And when it does this, it comes moſt ſtrongly recommended to our Care and Cultivation, our Attention and Reverence. But if either out of Lazineſs Men ſtop ſhort of, or out of Vicious Prejudice exclude, or out of Self-ſufficiency affect an Independence upon, the great Principles of *Religion:* The Dictates of Reaſon become uncertain and precarious; Reaſon loſes its Dignity, its Authority, and becomes a Faculty in every View wholly unaccountable.

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[a] Eph. II. 12.

[b] Job XXXV. 11.

BENEVOLENCE is indeed a Principle of a more active Nature, and may perhaps be thought capable of ſupplying the Deficiencies of *Reaſon* with Regard to Social Happineſs. —Not to enter into any Diſpute concerning the *Origin* of Benevolent Affection: Let us ſuppoſe it to be as Natural and as Univerſal, as is ſometimes contended. Yet ſurely we need not prove, that Men have *other* Affections, equally Natural and Univerſal, and at leaſt equally importunate for their reſpective Gratifications. And whenſoever the Gratification of the former ſhould interfere with that of theſe latter, as it frequently would in *Reality*, and more frequently in *Appearance*; we may appeal to Experience to determine for us, what the Reſult *would generally* be, were Men actuated by no farther Views, no higher Principle. Or (which I would obſerve here once for all) *ſhould* ſome Few be diſpoſed to hearken to *the ſtill ſmall Voice* of Nature in Favour of the Publick; ſuch a Diſpoſition could ſerve only to render its Owners a more eaſy Prey to the Force or Fraud of an infinitely greater Number.

How unfriendly a Diſbelief of the Principles of Religion muſt be to Publick Spirit, in the Accounts of *Reaſon*, has been already intimated: But the Influence it would have *directly* and *immediately* on Men's Purſuits, and their very *Tempers*, would probably be much more ſo. The *active* Part of Mankind would naturally put themſelves under the Conduct of the ſelfiſh and overbearing Paſſions: Whilſt the more *ſedentary* would deliver themſelves up to Gloom and Melancholy, to Spleen and Sullenneſs. And how ill muſt every generous Affection thrive in ſuch a Soil!—We are surpriſed and ſhocked at the Ingratitude and Inſolence of a [a] *Nabal* to his *Benefactor* applying for Relief under the humble, and at the ſame Time endearing, Appellation of his *Son David*. But all this is fully accounted for, when we read, that he was *a Man of Belial*; inſenſible of the Obligations, and a Stranger to the Comforts, of *Religion*; and no wonder then if deaf alſo to all the Demands of *Humanity*.

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[a] See Sam. XXV.

With what different Sentiments does a Senſe of Religion inſpire us towards our Fellow-Creatures! — That *We have all one Father:* That our Intereſts are alike in the Hands of a moſt wiſe, moſt gracious Being: —What Calmneſs muſt ſuch Reflections ſpeak to our Breaſts: What Chearfulneſs muſt *That* diffuſe over our Conduct towards thoſe around us! Our gloomy Thoughts, our melancholy Apprehenſions, are all now diſpelled. Here is Room and Encouragement for every generous Affection. Conſcious of being continually under ſuch a Protection, we are no longer anxious about our Private Concerns; we can allow thoſe of the Publick a juſt Share in our Regards. [a] *None of us liveth to himſelf, and no Man dieth unto himſelf.*

Honour, conſidered as a Principle of Action, conſiſts in a Senſe of the Dignity of our Nature, and a Reſolution at all Hazards to act up to it. An Habit of Mind, which when conducted by Reaſon, and ſupported by Religion, will ever produce excellent Fruits, and can hardly be too much encouraged: But when it takes, (as without Religion it ever will take) popular and prevailing Notions for the Standard of what is agreeable to a Man's Dignity or Character; this ſame Habit of Mind becomes a moſt capricious, and may be a moſt hurtful, Principle: Nor is there, in Fact, any Thing ſo ridiculous, or ſo deſtructive of Publick Order, which our *Men of Honour* will not eaſily be reconciled to the Commiſſion of, nay challenge Applauſe for. So precarious will the *Morals*, as well as the [a] *Faith*, of thoſe Perſons always be found, *who receive Honour one of another, and not the Honour that cometh from GOD only.*

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[a] Rom. XIV. 7.

And what is here obſerved with Regard to *Particular Perſons*, is equally obſervable of *Societies.* We read of ſome Nations, even in the Heathen World, of whom *many excellent Things are* related as proceeding from a Principle of Honour and Bravery of Mind. But upon Enquiry, it will appear, that the Beneficial Effects of this Principle, if not the Prevalence of the Principle itſelf, always kept pace with the Regard paid to *Religion.* No ſooner did any ſuch Nation fall into a [b] *Diſlike to retain GOD in their Knowledge,* but we find them preſently *given up to a reprobate Mind, to do* [τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα] *Things* leaſt *agreeable* to, moſt unworthy of, their Nature.

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[a] John V. 44. [b] Rom. I. 28.

The Truth is, *Religion* affords the *only rational* Foundation for a Senſe of *Honour*. If Man be ſuppoſed, with Regard to his *whole* Being, (and ſomething like this the *Atheiſt*, if he thinks at all, muſt ſuppoſe) *to come up like a Flower, and be cut down again*, like a Vegetable to bloſſom and flouriſh for a little While, and then to decay, wither, and ſink into the Ground from which he ſprung: If he be ſuppoſed to come into this World *by Chance*; to *ſojourn in it* for a Few Years *as in a ſtrange Land*; continually reminded of his defenceleſs Condition, and not conſcious of any ſuperior Protection; and, after a dull Round of Objects which himſelf cannot reliſh, and of Employments which he cannot but deſpiſe, to drop into *Nothing* as if he had never been! — Need I aſk, What *Dignity* there is in ſuch a Compoſition as this? No certainly. We muſt be excuſed from expecting any great Aſſiſtance to Morality, any conſiderable Services to the Publick, from the *Honour* of thoſe Perſons, who own themſelves to be of ſuch an Extraction, and are able to give us no better Account, whence they come, or whither they are going!

Civil Government was the laſt Expedient above mentioned for ſecuring Mankind againſt the ill Effects of each other's Appetites and Paſſions: And an Expedient it undoubtedly is moſt beneficial, indeed in Man's preſent State abſolutely neceſſary, for that Purpoſe. But it is as certain, that Civil Government *always has* called in the Aſſiſtance of Religion; and in the Nature of Things *always muſt* do ſo.

I inſiſt not here on the Atheiſt's giving us a ſatisfactory Account of the *Firſt Formation* of Civil Societies; or on his clearing up the *many* Suppoſitions *He* muſt make previouſly to that of any Conſtitution of Government at all. Let us ſuppoſe with him (without being too ſcrupulouſly inquiſitive after the Time, Place, Manner, Motives, &c) that a *great Majority*, as the Governed in every Society muſt be, not inſiſting on their *natural Equality*, have agreed to ſubject themſelves to *One*, or at moſt a *Few*, of their Brethren. — We aſk then, "What ſhall ſecure, to the *Governed*, the Beneficial Exerciſe of the Power they have conveyed; and, to the *Governours*, the Firmneſs and Continuance of the Conveyance?"—What ſhall engage the *ſeveral Mem-*

bers of the Community to contribute their reſpective Shares to the *Publick Weal?"* —— And, in ſhort, "What ſhall render Government, in every Reſpect, a *real* and *general* Bleſſing?"

We have ſeen, how inſufficient the Faculty of Reaſon, and the Principles of Benevolence or Honour, will always, *of themſelves,* be in *particular* Perſons, to withſtand the Force of Appetite and Paſſion: And, we may well ſuppoſe, the *Addition* of *Power* will hardly diminiſh the Force of thoſe Appetites and Paſſions, which it gives an Opportunity of Gratifying. Exaltation and Dominion have been always obſerved to be of an intoxicating Nature. And tho' Government, under the moſt diſadvantageous Circumſtances, may ſeem preferable to Anarchy; yet Governours conſcious of being armed with Power, and not conſcious of any Superior Being, from whom they derive, and to whom they are accountable for it, *might* render a Nation ſufficiently miſerable: Nor is there much Room to hope, that They who *fear not GOD* would, in ſuch a Situation, *regard Man.*

Let us, however, ſuppoſe the Governing Part of the Society, from whatever Principle, heartily diſpoſed to promote its Welfare and

Proſperity: Yet, how ſhall they be ſecure of being *ſupported* in their Authority? Or, without ſuch Security, how ſhall they *proceed* with a proper *Vigour* in accompliſhing the Good Ends of it?—If a Number of Men be ſuppoſed to have devolved ſo much Power, upon One or a Few of their Equals, as is requiſite for their Protection, and the Promotion of their Intereſts: We need not doubt but they will think themſelves *at Liberty* at leaſt to *reſume* that Power, whenſoever they do not, or (which will be a much more common Caſe) whenſoever they *imagine* they do not, reap the Advantages expected from it. And, whilſt every little Diſappointment, every trivial Grievance, every wanton Deſire of Change, ſhall, by thoſe who will be at once *Parties* and *Judges* in this Caſe, be improved into a ſufficient Reaſon for Inſurrection and Rebellion: How *precarious* muſt be the *Tenure* by which *any* Prince can hold his Authority! How *weak the Hands* of a *Good* Prince in exerting it to any Beneficial Purpoſe! How vain muſt it be to expect, that thoſe Perſons, who *fear not GOD*, ſhould, on any ſteady Principle, *honour the King!*

But ſuppoſing the Relative Obligations of Governours and Governed regularly adjuſted, and all the Security given of a mutual Concurrence for the Publick Good, that can well be imagined; Still it remains to be conſidered, "How the *Good Ends* of Government itſelf ſhall be *purſued* and *accompliſhed?* I would on this Occaſion particularly ſpecify Two of theſe Ends; — That of *Determining Differences* which ſhall ariſe about Property; — and That of Guarding the Members of the Community againſt mutual Invaſions, by *properly* applying *Penal Sanctions.* Now the Diſpenſers of Juſtice muſt in many, if not all, Caſes of both Kinds determine upon ſuch Evidence as can be had only from the Teſtimony of Others: And yet, what Security can they have of the Veracity of ſuch Teſtimony, but upon a Preſumption that the Perſons who give it are under the Awe of a Being, *from whom no Secrets are hid?* Without this Preſumption, Courts of Judicature cannot take one Step with any Satisfaction or Aſſurance; An Oath can give no Security, can have no Senſe in it; and all Judicial Proceſſes muſt become idle Pomp, and Trifling with Solemnity.

Add to all this, that many Practices, of a Tendency very prejudicial to Publick Welfare, are yet of ſuch a Nature, as expoſes them not to the Cenſure of Human Laws: The greateſt Crimes may often be tranſacted ſo ſecretly as to *eſcape* the *Knowledge*: and the greateſt Criminals may ſometimes be ſo numerous, or ſo powerful, as to *defy* the *Reſentment*, of the Magiſtrate. — In all theſe Caſes, and many others, Civil Government muſt ever be unable to puniſh, and therefore alſo inſufficient to reſtrain.

In ſhort; without *Religion*, it is hard to ſay what Foundation there could be for any ſuch mutual *Confidence* among Men, as is neceſſary to the Support of Government, the very Being of Society. Without ſuppoſing each other under the Influence of this Principle, every Man might too juſtly be in perpetual Fear of every other, who ſhould be either ſtronger or more ſubtle than himſelf; ſo long as the one could think himſelf poſſeſſed of any Thing, which the other might think it worth while to invade; or ſo long as the other could be ſuppoſed to have either Luſt or Appetite, Revenge or even Wantonneſs, to be gratified by infeſting him. The Apprehenſion that [a] *every One, who ſhould meet him would ſlay him*, muſt in this State of Things be the melancholy Portion of every

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[a] Gen. IV. 14.

Son of *Adam*; and all Mankind might join in the Complaint, "[a] *My Puniſhment is greater than I can bear!*"

But [b] *the* Lord *is King, the Earth may be glad thereof!* — When we take into our Account the General Acknowledgment of a God, a Providence, a Future State; the Face of the Moral World is changed: Society becomes practicable, and Government a Bleſſing. Where Religious Principles prevail, good *Kings* may *reign* with Security to themſelves, and Benefit to their People. Subordinate Magiſtrates will know themſelves to be under the ſtrongeſt Obligation, the moſt powerful Engagement, to *decree Juſtice:* And may proceed in doing ſo with Chearfulneſs, whilſt thoſe who give them Information, or Evidence, or Verdict, are preſumed to give it *in Truth and Righteouſneſs, as ſeeing Him who is inviſible.* The Peaceable and Inoffenſive Subject will have all the Security with Regard to his Perſon and Property, that either a Senſe of an Almighty Protection in his own Breaſt, or the ſuppoſed Awe of an Almighty Vengeance in the Breaſts of other Men, can poſſibly give him. Whilſt thoſe who are diſpoſed to be contentious and injurious, muſt, to come at the Properties of others, break looſe from all the Ties of *Intereſt* as well as *Conſcience:* They muſt, by giving Diſturbance to Society, expoſe themſelves not only to the Wrath of the Magiſtrate, but to a more inevitable, more dreadful, Indignation: They muſt give up their own moſt valuable Intereſts, before they can allow themſelves to invade thoſe of other Men; and become in the ſtricteſt Senſe *Fools* in order to be *Knaves*.

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[a] V. 13. [b] Pſal. XCVII. 1.

Upon the Whole; The Remedies we have been conſidering are certainly, in Conjunction with the Fear of God, of no ſmall Benefit to Societies. But, ſhould we once ſet aſide the Supports and Enforcements of Religion, we ſhould ſoon experience the Inſufficiency of all other Preſervatives of Publick Order and Happineſs; and find Reaſon to lament our having parted with the only effectual Reſtraint upon thoſe *Luſts* and Paſſions, *from whence come Wars and Fightings, Confuſion and every evil Work.*——

A Reſtraint of univerſal Extent, and only not irreſiſtible Efficacy: the Influence whereof reaches to every Relation, every Office of Life; which, like the great Object of it, *is about our Bed and about our Path*; which follows us into the cloſeſt Receſſes, and *meets us in every Thought:* A Reſtraint, to the Powerfulneſs of which the *Libertine* and the *Atheiſt* loudly bear Teſtimony; the Former, by making it his avowed Quarrel with Religion, and the Latter, his boaſted Triumph upon a pretended Conqueſt over it: But a Reſtraint, to which *We* muſt have Leave *to glory in our profeſſed Subjection*; as well knowing, that it debars us of no Liberty but ſuch as is deſtructive of Publick as well as Private Happineſs; that it maintains the juſt Authority of thoſe Parts only (both in the *Political* Syſtem without us, and the *Moral* one within us) which are fitted to govern; and requires the Subordination of thoſe only which are fitted to obey: And a Reſtraint therefore, which we conſider not as the Invader, but as the Guardian, of both Social and Perſonal Freedom.

After all, I muſt not diſſemble a material Exception to what has been offered. — The *Effects* of a Religious Principle will, in Courſe, depend much on the *Notions* Men entertain concerning the *Object* of it. Thus, if the Nature of the Deity be uncertain, or his Will unknown, a Morality conſiſting in an Imitation of That Nature, and an Obedience to

That Will, muſt become imperfect and precarious in Proportion. But, ſhould the Deity be conceived to be a capricious and weak Being, much more, an Example and Patron of Treachery, Debauchery, Cruelty, &c; ſuch a *corrupt Religion*, (tho' in ſome Reſpects preferable to * *no Religion at all)* muſt have an Influence but little favourable to the Morals of its Profeſſors, or the Intereſts of Society.

How far the Religion of the *Gentile* World is affected by this Exception, thoſe among ourſelves who appear ſolicitous to reduce *Us* to it, might do well to conſider. In the mean Time (Bleſſed be GOD!) We *Chriſtians* are prepared to give a full Anſwer to it. And for this Purpoſe I proceed to repreſent to you,

II. *Secondly*, The *Excellency* of *Revealed* Religion in particular, for Securing and Promoting National Virtue and Happineſs.

Not that I here preſume to do Juſtice to a Subject ſo extenſive; nor will any laboured Illuſtration of it, I hope, be thought neceſſary. Only, in reference to the foregoing Suggeſtion, I cannot but obſerve, that our Holy

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* See Hooker's Eccl. Polity B. 5. §. 1.

Religion conſtantly ſets forth the God whom We *fear* at once in the moſt *Amiable*, and the moſt *Awful*, Light: — In His own Nature, as a pure [a] *Spirit*, [b] every where preſent, having [c] *all Things naked and open to His* View; [d] *Glorious in Holineſs*, infinitely removed from all Imperfection, all Poſſibility of being ſo much as [e] *tempted with Evil:* — In the Exerciſe of His Power, as [f] *Gracious and Merciful, ſlow to Anger, and of great Kindneſs*; yet as [g] *by no Means willing to clear the Guilty:* — In His Providence over States and Kingdoms, as making their Proſperity or Adverſity more viſibly correſpond with their Piety or Impiety: — And towards all Mankind in their *Private* Capacity, as having [h] *appointed a Day, in which He will judge the World in Righteouſneſs:* a Day, in which He will completely rectify all the ſeeming Irregularities in His preſent Diſtributions; and [i] *render to every Man* his Final Allotment, of *Everlaſting* Happineſs or *Eternal* Miſery, *according to his Deeds*.—The Truth is, Every Reaſon already given for the *Importance* of Religion in general to Societies, has been an Anticipation of the Proof of the *Excellency* of *That* Religion, which *alone*, with any *Certainty*, repreſents Its adorable Object as uniformly and unchangeably *Holy*, and *Juſt*, and *Good*.

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[a] Joh. IV. 24. [b] Pſal. CXXXIX, 1—12. [c] Heb. IV. 13. [d] Exod. XV. 11. [e] Jam. I. 13. [f] Joel II. 13. [g] Exod. XXXIV. 7. [h] Acts XVII. 31. [i] Rom. II. 6.

And as Revelation has furniſhed us with ſuch Excellent Accounts of the *Divine* Nature, ſo has it made us, not leſs uſefully, acquainted with *our own*. That the Principles of our Compoſition are at Variance with each other, has been already ſuppoſed, and is too manifeſt from *Experience*: But in the *ſacred Writings* alone we read the firſt Occaſion of this [a] *War* between *the Law in our Members* and *the Law of our Minds*; which the *Natural Man* could no more account for, than he could *deliver himſelf from it*. And as we here learn the true Source, ſo here we are directed to the proper Cure, of our Degeneracy. Here every Part of our Nature that deſerves to be ſtrengthened, receives Aſſiſtance, Direction, and Encouragement; at the ſame Time that every corrupt and pernicious Tendency is brought under all the Diſcipline and Reſtraint, that can be proper for, or indeed conſiſtent with, our Rational Nature.

Is *Reaſon* a Faculty fitted to contribute any Thing towards National Virtue and Happineſs? But where do we find the Native Pre-eminence, the Divine Original, of this Faculty ſo fully diſcovered? where its Views ſo enlarged? where its genuine Dictates recommended by ſo high an Authority, or enforced by ſuch powerful Sanctions, as in the Revelation vouchſafed us of *His* Will, [a] *who is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all Things?* — Is *Benevolence* a Principle in any Degree beneficial to Civil Societies? Let the Deiſt tell us, Where every Affection of the Generous Kind is ſo deſcribed in its Properties, ſo exalted in its Principle, ſo extended in its Influence, ſo incited by Examples, ſo animated by Rewards, as in that *Holy Commandment*, that Divine Inſtitution, [b] *the End of which is Charity.* — Is a Senſe of *Honour* productive of any Good Effects to the Publick? The ſame Revelation [c] preſents us with the moſt rational Foundation for this Principle, the only ſatisfactory Account of the Original Dignity of our Nature: And, when that Dignity was in great Meaſure loſt, here, and *here only*, we learn, what extraordinary Methods have been, and ſtill are, taken by every Perſon in the Ever-Bleſſed *Trinity*, for advancing *each Part* of our Compoſition to yet greater Dignity than that from which we fell. — And laſtly, Is *Civil Government* an Expedient neceſſary to preſerve the Order and Happineſs of Mankind? But never was its Origin explained; never its Powers guarded from Abuſe on one Hand, and from Inſult on the other; never its ſeveral Good Ends provided for, in ſo ſummary, ſo certain, and ſo authoritative a Way, as by Revelation: which informs us, without any tedious Deduction, that [a] *the Powers that be are ordained of GOD*; that *Rulers* are *the Miniſters of GOD for Good*; and that We *muſt needs be ſubject* to them, *not only for Wrath but alſo for Conſcience Sake.*

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[a] Rom. VII. 23, 24.

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[a] 1 Joh. III. 20. [b] 1 Tim. I. 5. [c] Gen. I. 26, 27.

But ſtill more eminently does the Excellency of our Religion, and its Uſefulneſs to Societies, diſplay itſelf, in removing the *chief Cauſe* of Social as well as Perſonal Diſorder: not by an idle Attempt to extirpate our Affections, but by firſt purifying and exalting them, and then placing before them Objects moſt worthy of their Purſuit.—Are Societies diſturbed, and the *Foundations of the* Political *World put out of Courſe*, by Men's intruding into the Province, and impertinently cenſuring the Conduct, of their Superiors? Chriſtianity calls home Men's miſapplied Concern, bidding them [a] *Study to be Quiet and to do their own Buſineſs.*—Are Men's Endeavours for the Benefit of Others and the Service of the Publick, checked and reſtrained by an Attention to *private* Intereſt? Chriſtianity *alone* has effectually, and againſt all Caſualties, reconciled theſe interfering Tendencies: It has placed our Kindneſs to others at once on the moſt *Generous* and moſt *Rational* Foundation; teaching us to deſire no *preſent* Returns for our Good Offices, yet aſſuring us of an abundant *Recompence at the Reſurrection of the Juſt.* —Are Revengefulneſs and Litigiouſneſs productive of any Ills to Societies? *This Wiſdom which is from above is firſt Pure, then Peaceable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated:* It baniſhes that *Love of the World* and that *Pride of Life,* which make our Competitions degenerate into Quarrels; which give Keenneſs to our Reſentments, and Continuance to our Enmity: It forbids not a due Care for our Temporal Intereſts, nor debars us of any *fair* Methods of recovering them when invaded: But, by extending our Proſpect into a far better Country, and engaging our Hopes and our *Hearts* upon the *Treaſures* of that Place, It ſcarce leaves Room for a Temptation *to fall out with*

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[a] Rom. XIII. 1, 4, 5.

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[a] 1 Theſſ. IV. 11.

our Brethren by the Way; to enter into any great Warmth, or to cheriſh any laſting Hatred, on the Account of any Thing in this World.

From ſuch an Inſtitution what Aſſiſtance and Encouragement muſt not Morality receive? how friendly muſt it needs be, in its Natural Tendency, to the Intereſts of Civil Societies? What could a Lover of Mankind more ardently wiſh for, than that ſuch a Religion ſhould be every where received, every where obeyed? — But I haſten to ſuggeſt to You,

III. *Thirdly* and *Laſtly*, Some of thoſe *Inferences* which ſeem naturally to reſult from the foregoing Conſiderations. And

Firſt, From what has been ſaid it is obvious to infer, that *Magiſtrates* and All that are intruſted with the Care of Publick Order and Happineſs are, *for that very End*, highly concerned to ſupport and encourage *Religion*.

And here, by *Religion* I underſtand, not only the *internal* Belief of a God and a Providence, together with ſuch Affections of Love, Reverence, Truſt, &c, as that Belief tends naturally to produce; but alſo thoſe *outward* Expreſſions of Both in Acts of *Social* Worſhip, by which I will *preſume* a Society of *Reaſonable* Creatures, ſenſible of many *common* Wants to be ſupplied, many *common* Calamities to be averted, many *common* Benefits to be acknowledged, would conclude it neceſſary to apply to their *common* Creator and Governour. That *Religion* in the former Senſe, however it may be in its *Principle* a *Perſonal* Matter, will ever in its *Effects* greatly affect *Societies*, has already appeared. But I would here obſerve farther, that even *Perſonal* Religion never did, never will, generally or conſiderably prevail, where ſome *Publick Profeſſion* of it is not regularly kept up; where the Members of a Community are not frequently called together to *recognize* the Authority of the Supreme Being, and to confirm their awful Senſe of His Power, Majeſty, and Goodneſs, by devout *Expreſſions* of it: Nor indeed can there well be a Foundation for mutual *Truſt* and *Confidence* among the Members of a Society, without ſome *viſible* Worſhip of Almighty God; by attending whereupon They may give each other *Satisfaction* of their being under the Influence of the ſame common Principle.—In ſhort, Both the *Internal Principle* and the *External Profeſſion* of Religion are neceſſary, not only as Branches of our

Duty to God, but to ſecure the *Natural* Good Ends of Religion to Civil Societies. For the Promotion and Support of Each, therefore, every prudent as well as pious Magiſtracy will think itſelf concerned to make a competent Proviſion.

I muſt not ſtop here. It has been already intimated, how much the Morals of a People may and muſt ſuffer from a *corrupt* Religion, from unworthy Notions or impure Worſhip of the Deity. Every Reaſon, therefore, which can be given for the Magiſtrate's ſupporting and encouraging *Any* Religion, will plead for his diſtinguiſhed Favour to *ſuch* a Religion, and *ſuch only*, as is in its Repreſentations of the Divine Being, and of the Methods of applying to Him, Pure and Holy; and in its Precepts and General Tendency at once Beneficial to the Social and Perſonal Intereſts of Mankind. How fully the *Chriſtian* Religion comes recommended to Favour under Each of theſe Characters, even ſeparately from that far ſuperiour Title to *Reverence* which its *Divine Original* gives it, I need not now ſtay to illuſtrate. Let me only add, That if among the ſeveral Denominations of Chriſtians there be *One*, which has preſerved the due Medium — in its *Diſcipline*, between Tyranny and

Perſecution on one Hand, and Licentiouſneſs and Anarchy on the other; — in its *Doctrines*, between ſuch Claims of Infallibility as preclude all private Judgment, and ſuch Latitude as would render a Revelation inſignificant for the Purpoſe of a Rule of Faith; — in its *Worſhip*, between ſuperſtitious and idolatrous Pomp, and a Neglect of Decency and Order: — If in its *profeſſed Principles* it be beſt fitted to promote publick Peace and Happineſs, and in its *external Polity* beſt adapted to the Form of the Civil Conſtitution: — and if, over and above all theſe, it be in *other Reſpects* moſt comformable to the Original Standard, and to the Uſages of the Beſt and Pureſt Ages of Chriſtianity: Such a Society of Chriſtians (we truſt) will ever recommend itſelf to a Wiſe and Religious Prince, as worthy of *His Firſt and always His Chief Care*. And we acknowledge it with humble Gratitude to Almighty God, and with all due Thankfulneſs to thoſe whom He hath ſet over us, that We of the *Church* of *England* can with Pleaſure make the Application. — But

Secondly, We may farther infer, that all Attempts to remove the Influences of *Religion*, or to ſet Men looſe from a Senſe of its *ſacred* Obligations, may be conſidered as ſo many

Attempts againſt Publick Order and Happineſs, and be juſtly *reſented* as ſuch by the Guardians of it.

I would not here be underſtood as deſiring by this Inference to ſubject all thoſe to the Magiſtrate's *Reſentment*, who may not, by the foregoing one, be recommended to his *eſpecial Favour*. The Subject before us leads me not to conſider the Caſe of a conſcientious *Separation* from the Communion favoured by Publick Wiſdom; nor yet of ſuch an *Oppoſition* to the Terms of that Communion, as is conſiſtent with *Publick Peace*, and the inviolable Regard due to *Religion* in general, and to ſo excellent a Religion as the *Chriſtian* in particular. Thus much indeed is certain; that a wiſe Government, jealous of all Advances towards *Irreligion*, will ever have a watchful Eye upon all ſuch Diſputes as, either on Account of the Matters debated, or the Manner of debating them, appear to have a Tendency *That Way*. The Caſe, however, which I have principally in View, is that of Oppoſition, not to *particular* Forms of Church-Communion or Eſtabliſhments, under the Acknowledgement of the ſame Divine Revelation; but to *all* Church-Communion, *all* Eſtabliſhments, *all* Revealed Religion; and yet more eſpecially, that of Attempting to rob a Nation of all Senſe of *any* Religion, or (which amounts to the ſame Thing) to deprive them of a Religion, the good Effects of which they have long experienced, without leaving them any *determinate* one to ſupply its Place. This is an Attempt *directly* and *immediately* affecting the Publick Welfare, and incapable of Alleviation from any Plea either of *Conſcience* or *Charity*: And is an Attempt therefore, againſt which every Government is concerned to expreſs a [a]*perfect Hatred, and to count* the Authors (what *indeed* they are) *its own* worſt *Enemies.*

The Reſentment here pleaded for will (no Doubt) be called *Perſecution*, by thoſe who are forward to deſerve, but unwilling to ſuffer, it. Let it however be called Perſecution for *Unrighteouſneſs*, for *Blaſphemy*, for avowed *Atheiſm*; And for *ſuch* Perſecution, (if a Defence of every Thing ſacred *muſt* be *ſo called)* no Good Man need be aſhamed to plead. No Man complains of the Execution of the Laws againſt Robbers, Perjured Perſons, Murderers, &c. And, " Whether *They who break one of theſe Commandments*, or *They who teach Men ſo* — who remove from them the only effectual Reſtraint from the Worſt of Villanies, by inſtructing them to be under no Apprehenſion of *Guilt*, nor in Caſes of Secrecy of any *After-Puniſhment* — are more heinouſly criminal in themſelves, or more *extenſively* injurious to the Publick," can ſurely be no difficult Matter to determine. — But

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[a] Pſal. CXXXIX. 22.

Thirdly, I beg Leave to infer, that *thoſe Perſons*, who have voluntarily dedicated themſelves to the Office of explaining and inculcating the great Principles of Religion, and have devoted their Time and their Labours to a *continual Attendance* on this Service, may reaſonably expect to be conſidered, regarded, and ſupported, as *uſeful* Members of the Community.

Men may declaim plauſibly upon the Self-Sufficiency of that Reaſon which is common to All: It may be ſaid, that the Doctrines and Duties of Natural Religion, and, in a Country where the Scriptures are in every Body's Hands, thoſe of Revealed Religion alſo, muſt be clearly diſcoverable by Reaſon. And this Kind of Flattery will always be moſt greedily ſwallowed by thoſe who are leaſt entitled to it. But (to conſider this Matter impartially) by *What Reaſon* are theſe Things ſo clearly diſcoverable? Not ſurely by the Reaſon of *Children*, either in Age or *in Underſtanding*:

But by Reaſon regularly cultivated, faithfully conſulted, and as faithfully followed. And, of how ſmall a Part of Mankind ſuch Reaſon as *This* will ordinarily be the Portion, let Experience determine. —In Fact, Information and Inſtruction are neceſſary to give Mankind in general a proper Acquaintance with thoſe Truths, which are of the utmoſt Conſequence to them. And, even after the *good Seed of the Word is ſown, and has taken Root*; *the Cares of this World*, the numerous Concerns, about which the greateſt Part of Mankind ever have ſuffered, ever will ſuffer, their Time and their Thoughts to be almoſt wholly engaged, would ſoon *choak it, and render it unfruitful*; were not the ſame watchful Care employed in a continual Cultivation of it. To ſpeak freely; that a conſiderable Part of our Species does not degenerate into Barbarians and Savages, is in great Meaſure owing to ſome ſuch Stated Returns of Attendance on the Publick Worſhip of Almighty God, and of Hearing His Word explained and enforced, as we of this Nation (happy, if we could but be made ſenſible of our Happineſs!) enjoy. By the Labours of a *ſtanding Order of Preachers*, (a Privilege unknown to the Gentile World) *the Bread from Heaven falls*, as it were, *among our Tents, even* *round about our Habitation.* And, if we take into the Account, the more familiar Methods of inſtructing the Young and Ignorant, adviſing the Diffident, reproving the Froward, encouraging the Well-diſpoſed; ſpeaking Satisfaction to the Scrupulous, Relief to the Deſponding, and Peace to the Departing, Soul— Theſe are Offices, which (it is hoped) will not fail to conciliate the Friendſhip of every Lover of Mankind, to an Order of Men ſo uſefully employed; if not on Account of their Divine Inſtitution, at leaſt *for their Work's Sake.*

There is one Conſideration farther, which I take Leave to mention under this Article, and at this Time.—We have heard much of late of the Spreading of *Popery* in this Kingdom; and it is a Report, which cannot be received without Concern by any Lover of his Country or his Holy Religion. But to what can this Appearance be more probably aſcribed, than to thoſe Suſpicions and Jealouſies, which the more unlearned Part of the Laity have been *taught* to entertain for their proper Paſtors, the *Parochial Clergy?* He muſt be *a Stranger* among us, *who knows not*, what extravagant Writings have of late Years been publiſhed, and with what Aſſiduity they have been diſperſed; reproaching not only ſome

Scandals to the Order, but the *Whole* Order *in general*; as mercenary and deſigning, as aiming at Nothing but Dominion and Wealth, and as proſecuting an Intereſt not only diſtinct from, but oppoſite to, that of the reſt of Mankind. As to the *Juſtneſs* of theſe General and Undiſtinguiſhing Accuſations, the World muſt judge between us. But, methinks, *Patriots* ſo watchful ſhould conſider, when by ſuch repeated Invectives the People are *worked up* into a Diſlike and Hatred of thoſe, to whom not only the Laws of CHRIST, but the Laws of the Land, direct them to apply in Caſes of Doubt and Difficulty; how almoſt unavoidably They muſt either throw off all Regard for Religion, or fall an eaſy and willing Prey to Thoſe, *who lie in wait to deceive:* To thoſe bold Undertakers eſpecially, who are always at hand, ready to offer them a *ſafe Conduct*, and to recommend their own deluſive Attempts with an Appearance of great *Diſintereſtedneſs*, and extraordinary Sanctity. What Numbers, eſpecially among *the unlearned and unſtable*, have been in this Manner reconciled to the *Romiſh* Communion, it is not perhaps eaſy to ſay. But *thus much*, I preſume, we may collect (if *any Thing* can be collected) from the Experience of paſt Times — That, if ever *Popery* is effectually kept out of this Kingdom, this muſt be done, not by Throwing down the Fences of our preſent happy Eſtabliſhment, nor by alienating the Affections of the People from thoſe, who are appointed to guard them from Deluſion; (Methods which muſt ever give the *Romaniſts*, as indeed they ever have given them, the Advantages they moſt wiſh for againſt us;) but by a ſteady Adherence to that *Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution*, which has always been the *Glory*, and has on many Occaſions proved itſelf to be the *Bulwark*, of the *Reformation*.

In ſhort; If the Intereſts of *Societies* be at all concerned in the Prevalence of *Religion* in general, or the Happineſs of *This Nation* in that of *Reformed Religion* in particular; it is as certain, that the Credit and beneficial Effects of both theſe are cloſely connected with the Reputation and Influence of the Perſons, that are appointed to *Teach* them. A Conſideration, which muſt ever plead for a ſuitable Regard and Support to thoſe Teachers; as it is undoubtedly a moſt powerful Engagement upon Perſons, in a Situation of ſo great Conſequence, to [a] *Take Heed unto themſelves.*—But to return:

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[a] 1 Tim. IV. 16.

The Inference before us is manifeſtly extended, in the Reaſon of it, to *Places* ſet apart for *Training up* the Youth and Growing Hopes of the Nation in the uſeful, the neceſſary, Principles of Virtue and Religion. This indeed ſeems on all Hands ſo well underſtood, as to need no Illuſtration. *The Reproaches of them that reproach* our excellent Religion conſtantly *fall on* Theſe Societies, ſo happily formed for making early and ſucceſsful Impreſſions in Favour of it: And as They are honoured with the ſame Enemies, ſo (Bleſſed be God) They can boaſt the ſame Friends. The Protection with which we are favoured with Regard to our *Ancient Privileges*, and the Encouragement given to our *Publick Works*, are ſuch Honourable Teſtimonies in our Favour, as we acknowledge *in All Places with All Thankfulneſs.* —May Theſe illuſtrious Seminaries always enjoy the Friendſhip of the Publick! as, I truſt, They will ever continue to deſerve it, by making the Cultivation of Learning and Loyalty, of Honour and Virtue, and (for the Sake of every Thing amiable and praiſe-worthy) of *the Fear of GOD*, their conſtant Care.

Laſtly, and to conclude: Let us All, as we would approve ourſelves not only faithful *Servants of GOD*, but hearty *Friends* to our *Country,*

try, give all Diligence, firſt to fix in *our own* Minds, and then, as our Stations and Influence ſhall enable us, to propagate in the Minds *of others,* a juſt Senſe of the *Truth* as well as *Importance* of our moſt holy *Religion.*

Hitherto You have heard our Religion recommended as of Importance to the Order and Happineſs of *Civil Societies:* And we hope, in *this* View, It appears entitled to Protection and Patronage from *All that are in Authority.* But I muſt not conclude without obſerving, that we *can* go much farther in our Recommendation of It. We ſolicit not the Favour of the Great, or the Protection of the Powerful, from any *Diſtruſt* of our Cauſe. The Advocates for our Faith have produced many *convincing Proofs,* I doubt not to call them, *Demonſtrations,* of Its Truth and Certainty—Such Demonſtrations as the Nature of the Subject will admit of, and ſuch as are incomparably ſuperiour to thoſe we ſcruple not to reaſon and act upon in any other Part of Conduct. And, if our Religion be *True,* (as moſt unqueſtionably it is) we are infinitely concerned to remember, that the Conſequences of our Receiving and Obeying it, how important ſoever they may be to us in our *Social* Capacity, are, with regard to our *Perſonal* Capacity, inconceivably more ſo: They will follow us into that World, where Civil Societies ſhall have no Being; and will determine our Condition in a State Endleſs and Unchangeable.

May we all then, from a rational Conviction of the Truth, and a conſtant Senſe of the Obligations, of our Holy Religion, carefully and conſcientiouſly diſcharge our reſpective Duties in our ſeveral Stations, *as to the LORD, and not to Men.*—So ſhall *the Work of* our Country *proſper in our Hands,* and we ſhall derive upon it the [a] *Bleſſedneſs of a People who have the LORD for their GOD.* And, when all theſe Aſſociations, to which we here ſtand related, ſhall be diſſolved; when [b] *every One of us ſhall give an Account of himſelf to GOD;* ſtript of all theſe Marks of Diſtinction which the Ends of Government now make neceſſary: Such a diligent Improvement, and religious Application, of our *Talents,* to the Glory of our Creator and the Good of Mankind, ſhall, through the Merits of our Redeemer, ſecure to each of us that Gracious Sentence from our merciful Judge,—[c] "*Well done, Thou good* " *and faithful Servant: Thou haſt been faith-* "*ful over a few Things, I will make Thee* " *Ruler over many Things: Enter Thou into* " *the Joy of Thy LORD.*"

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[a] Pſal. CXLIV. 14. [b] Rom. XIV. 12. [c] Matt. XXV. 21.

A

SERMON

Preached before the
UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD*,
At St. *MARY*'s CHURCH,

On *Monday*, *January* 31. 1736-7.

Being the Day appointed to be kept as the
Day of the Martyrdom of
King *CHARLES* the Firſt.

The FOURTH EDITION.

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D

1 Peter II. 16.

As Free; *and not uſing* Your *Liberty for a Cloke of Maliciouſneſs*; *but as the Servants of* GOD.

"THAT the beſt Things are at once the moſt liable to be abuſed, and attended with the worſt Conſequences when they are ſo," is a Complaint which human Affairs give us frequent Occaſion to make; but never perhaps more juſt Occaſion than in the Inſtance ſuggeſted by the Words before us. To diſtinguiſh the exact Boundary between *Liberty* and *Licentiouſneſs*, and to ſay preciſely where the one ends and the other begins, requires more Diſcernment than we are often Maſters of even in our cool Deliberations; much leſs can ſo much Accuracy be expected from Men engaged in the Eagerneſs of Purſuit, and the

Heat of Action. And yet the Former is not more valuable, than the Latter is dangerous. When once Men have paſſed the Line between them, the farther they purſue Liberty, the farther they remove from it; till they find themſelves in thoſe Depths of Slavery, which they imagined they were taking the moſt ſpeedy Courſe to avoid.

For an Inſtance of what is here obſerved, we need go no farther, than to the Times which brought on, and immediately followed, the Tragedy of this Day: Times, not more diſtinguiſhed in their Beginning by a *paſſionate Zeal for* Liberty, than they were in their Progreſs by a moſt *malicious Abuſe*, and in their Concluſion by a moſt *deplorable Want* of it, with regard to Religion as well as Civil Government. The Effects of an uncontrollable Licenſe were then ſeverely felt; when this deluded Nation too late diſcovered, that it had been exchanging a well-regulated, *Legal*, Liberty, in one of the beſt Conſtitutions of Government, and under one of the moſt pious of Princes, for lawleſs Tyranny in every Shape, under a Succeſſion of inſolent Uſurpers; and a decent and edifying Form of Worſhip, under an Order of Church-Governours Primitive and *Apoſtolical*, for numerous wild and monſtrous Productions of Enthuſiaſm, agreeing in nothing but Superſtition and Blindneſs, made ſtill leſs ſupportable by wearing the venerable Names of Liberty and pure Religion.

Such an Example as this ought certainly to be a ſtanding Admonition to all ſucceeding Generations: And without Queſtion it has been, and, ſo long as it is duly remembered, always will be, a conſiderable Check upon that Spirit of Licentiouſneſs, to which we of this Nation ſeem to have too powerful a Tendency. Senſible of this, and (as it ſhould ſeem) in order to prevent any ſuch Impreſſions as a juſt Notion and proper Remembrance of thoſe Times might be apt to make, Some have endeavoured to deſtroy the Credit of our moſt faithful Accounts of them, and to ſubſtitute others better calculated for the Purpoſe of Diſguiſing. The Succeſs of ſuch Attempts among rational and impartial Men has not, I preſume, been much to be boaſted of. Yet, as in Calumnies of all Kinds *numerous* Accuſations, which *ſingly* taken would be ineffectual, often force their Way merely by being *boldly repeated*; ſo it ſeems to have happened with the, otherwiſe feeble, Efforts of Libertiniſm in the Caſe before us. The large Advances we have for ſome Time been making towards a Diſregard to all Order and Authority, both in Matters *Civil* and *Sacred*, under the ſpecious Appearance of *Liberty* in the one, and *Free-thinking* in the other, are ſuch as can hardly be otherwiſe accounted for, than by ſuppoſing us to have in a great Meaſure loſt the Remembrance of thoſe Diſtractions, which the like Pretences, not quite a *Century* ago, introduced into this Church and Nation.

An Attempt to adjuſt the *Extent* of *Religious* and *Civil Liberty*, and to ſuggeſt the *deſtructive Conſequences* of *Exceſſes* in either of them from the Experience of our Fore-fathers, may not at ſuch a Time as this be wholly *unſeaſonable*; nor will it be thought foreign to the Deſign of this Appointment, by which *We* are particularly directed to recommend and enforce the great Duty of *Submiſſion to Government*.

There were, it ſeems, ſome among the earlieſt Converts to Chriſtianity, who miſunderſtood the Nature of their *Chriſtian Liberty*, and perverted it to very unjuſtifiable Purpoſes. To remedy this Inconvenience, we find the firſt Preachers of the Goſpel ſcarcely ever mentioning the Name of *Liberty* without ſubjoining ſome Caution againſt the Abuſe of it.

To omit other Inſtances, the Apoſtle in my Text addreſſes thoſe to whom He wrote, in Terms of great Significance and Propriety upon this Subject. He admits their Claim to *Freedom*; but then He fails not immediately to warn them againſt thoſe miſchievous Deſigns, to which that Claim would probably be made Subſervient; He reminds them, that their Chriſtian Freedom, whatever might be meant by it, was certainly a *bounded* Freedom: that it left them, as it found them, *Servants to GOD*; and by no means exempted them from the Obſervance of *any* of *His* Inſtitutions: that *Civil Government* came particularly entitled to their Veneration under *That* Character: and that therefore, however the *Forms* of Government might be *Ordinances of Men*, they were bound to *ſubmit themſelves to every* one of them, which as *Strangers and Pilgrims* they ſhould happen to live under, *for the LORD's ſake*. *As Free* indeed; yet *not uſing* their *Liberty for a Cloke of Malicioufneſs*; *but as the Servants of GOD*.

The Caution before us ſeems to have had a ſpecial Regard to thoſe wrong Notions of *Chriſtian Liberty*, by which Order and Government were chiefly threatened in the Infancy of Chriſtianity. There is however no

Occaſion to confine it to this ſingle Point of View. The Danger now ariſes from *another* Quarter. The preſent Aſſertors of the Cauſe of Liberty ſeem not to think they have received any conſiderable Favours from Chriſtianity in *That* Reſpect, if in any other: The Liberty they inſiſt on is (it ſeems) their *Birthright*: They *were never in Bondage to any Man*; and therefore need not *the Truths* of the Goſpel to *make them Free*. In order therefore to conſider this Subject as uſefully in general, and as ſuitably to the preſent Occaſion in particular, as I can, I ſhall endeavour,

I. *Firſt*, To diſcover the real *State* and *Extent* of that *Liberty*, wherewith, in our ſeveral Relations and Capacities, we are *Free*.

II. *Secondly*, To illuſtrate the pernicious *Conſequences* of *Liberty purſued too far*; as exemplified in the Times, which this Solemnity calls upon us to remember. And

III. *Thirdly*, To conclude with a *ſuitable Application* of the foregoing Particulars.

I. Now *Freedom* is a Term of *Relative* Import, generally, if not always, implying a

Reſpect to ſome Obligations, Reſtraints, Inconveniences, Burdens, or the like, *from* which we are ſaid, or ſuppoſed, to be *Free.* And as Relative Terms mutually illuſtrate each other, the *Extent* of our Liberty in any Capacity may beſt be adjuſted by a View of the ſeveral *Reſtraints* or *Obligations* we lie under in *That* Capacity: Nothing being more evident, than that in whatſoever Inſtances we acknowledge an *Obligation* we can have no *conſiſtent* Claim to *Liberty.*

Again: *Freedom,* to any one who ſhall examine his own Idea of it, will (I believe) appear to be deſireable or valuable not ſo properly on *its own* Account, as for the Sake of *ſomething elſe*; in other Words, to be rather a *Mean* than an *End.* Now the Value of all Means ought to be eſtimated from their Conduciveneſs to the End propoſed to be ſerved by them. What Degrees of Liberty therefore are, in any Situation, *deſireable* by us, muſt be diſcovered by conſidering, what Degrees of it are likely to promote the Attainment of our proper End in that Situation: Becauſe, ſhould Liberty, in any Degrees of it, appear more likely to obſtruct than forward the End we have in View, it muſt *in Proportion* ceaſe to appear to us *deſireable.*

Theſe Obſervations, if taken along with us, will, I hope, aſſiſt us in ſatisfying Two important Points of Enquiry upon the preſent Subject; Namely, "To what Degrees of Liberty are we *juſtly entitled?* And, "What Meaſures of Liberty are *really deſireable* by us? And, that we may proceed with the greater Clearneſs, in regard chiefly to theſe *Queſtions*; it will farther be of Uſe, to conſider ourſelves diſtinctly as *Men*, and as *Chriſtians*; and, in each of theſe Reſpects, firſt ſeparately as *Individuals*, and then jointly as *Members of Society*.

Firſt then; Let us ſee how the Caſe ſtands with us as we are *Men and Individuals*, abſtracting from all Relation to, or Dependence upon, any of our Fellow-Creatures. In this View ſurely, if in any, we ſhall find ourſelves *abſolutely* Free, and ſubject to no Check or Controll. Yet, even here, the Caſe is quite otherwiſe. Man, when leaſt dependent on any created Being, is ſtill the *Servant of* that *GOD*, who firſt placed and continually ſupports him in the State, in which he finds himſelf. From GOD he every Moment receives *Life and Breath and all Things:* To *Him* therefore he owes the Service and Obedience of *all* his Powers. I may add, that

GOD has erected a Kind of Government in every Man's Breaſt, and made him, in due Subordination to His own Authority, *a Law unto himſelf:* He has implanted in each of us a Principle, to which we are accountable for the Uſe of our Freedom, and the Exerciſe of all our Faculties; which will, in Points within Its Sphere, *ſhew us what is good*; and acquit or condemn, reward or puniſh us, *according as our Work ſhall be. Human* Freedom then is by no Means a Freedom of Thinking or Acting at all Adventures; but is a Freedom *bounded* by the Dictates of *right Reaſon*, and the *Laws of GOD.*

And, as This is all the Liberty, that we can in our Perſonal Capacity *juſtly* lay any Claim to; ſo we cannot *prudently* wiſh for more. Man is a Being capable of underſtanding *Truth*, and enjoying *Happineſs*; and of both Truth and Happineſs GOD is in all Caſes the beſt, the only unerring, Judge. The Liberty then, that can be to Man deſireable, muſt be conducive to, at leaſt conſiſtent with, the Attainment of *Theſe* Ends: A Liberty of his *Intellectual Faculties* from Impediments in the Search of Truth; of his *Will* from any wrong Bias in the Choice of Means to Happineſs; and of his *inferiour Powers* from ſuch

Diſorders as would diſturb the Enjoyment of it: And all this under the Direction of that Being, who alone perfectly knows, *What Man is, and whereto he ſerveth, what is his Good, and what is his Evil.* To claim a Liberty beyond this; to ſhut out Information, and to reſiſt the Force of Evidence; to counteract the Order of our Nature, and to affect an Independence on the great Author of it; would be as irrational as it is impious: It would be to challenge as a Privilege the Liberty to err and to be miſerable.

Which Privilege a *Rational* Being might have been thought incapable of deſiring, had not the Deſire of it fatally diſcovered itſelf in the very *Firſt* of the whole *Species*; and were it not the ſame Kind of *Liberty* which has ever ſince been contended for by the *Children of Diſobedience.* For what were all the boaſted Conqueſts of *Epicurus* and his Followers of old, and what are all the later Efforts of the ſame Kind under the ſpecious Title of *Free-thinking*, but ſo many Struggles for an uncontrolled Freedom of Thought and Action. Indeed all Schemes of Morality and Duty, from which the *Divine Authority* is excluded, are (I fear) *really*, tho' not always *deſignedly*, Advances towards this Freedom upon Principle; and, ſhould they generally prevail, would ſoon be found ſtill nearer Approaches to it in Practice. But there are not wanting more direct Attempts *to break the Bonds* of Religion *in ſunder;* and to aſſert a Liberty of Action, unreſtrained by the perpetual Awe of a watchful Obſerver, an impartial Judge, and an Almighty Avenger: A Liberty, which at beſt, and ſuppoſing its Aſſertors ſucceſsful, could amount to no more than what our *firſt Parents* gained by their Excluſion from *Paradiſe*; I mean, a Liberty of going forth into a wild, unhoſpitable World without a Guide, of paſſing through it without Comfort, and of leaving it without Hope: But, in reality, a Liberty of affronting and provoking that All-powerful Being *that ſitteth in the Heavens*; who at preſent *looks down* with *Deriſion* on all ſuch vain Attempts; and will, if not timely appeaſed, one Day *ſpeak unto* their preſumptuous Authors *in His Wrath, and vex them in His ſore Diſpleaſure.*

Thus far Man has been conſidered as *out of Society.* This however is a State in which no Number of Men ever actually exiſted. It was from the Beginning, and in a State of Innocence, declared *not good for Man to be alone:*

And, had not God Himſelf interpoſed, *fallen* Men muſt ſoon have found it neceſſary to combine into Societies, and to conſtitute (as far as Men could of themſelves conſtitute) ſome Kind of Government. For tho' a Liberty of *doing every Man what ſhould ſeem right in his own Eyes*, is what the *Law of Nature* by no Means allows, yet it is what *Men* in a *State of Nature* would be very apt to aſſume: And a Liberty it is, which would ſoon exert itſelf in their *biting and devouring one another*, and ſoon terminate in their *being deſtroyed one of another*.

We are come then to the Enquiry, "How our Freedom ſtands as we are *Members of Society*, and how it is affected by the Introduction of *Civil Government* into the World?" And here it muſt be obſerved, that all thoſe Reſtraints, which the Law of Nature lays upon the Freedom of *Individuals*, ſtill ſubſiſt in full Force with regard to that of *Members of Society*. Man is, from the firſt Moment of his Being, *the Servant of GOD*: And, as *This* is a Relation never to be diſſolved, ſo neither can the Duties thence reſulting ever be ſuperſeded. However, though our Obligations to our *Supreme* Lord cannot be cancelled by our Subjection to any *Maſter on Earth*;

yet new Obligations will be ſuperadded, or rather our original Obligations will be enlarged, by every ſubſequent Relation wherein we ſtand. Some late Reaſoners upon Government, indeed, ſeem very unwilling to go thus far, or even to hear of any Diminution of Men's *Natural Liberties* at their Entrance into Society. But This, ſurely, is a Point, upon which I need not detain You. In the moſt popular Governments *ſome* Authority there muſt be, and *ſomewhere* placed: And *Authority*, whereſoever placed, muſt require a *proportionable* Submiſſion from Thoſe that are under it.—In ſhort: The *Law* of Nature is not to be ſet aſide, by any *Human* Conſtitution: But, under every Government the *Liberties* of Nature muſt be abridged, and the *Claims* of Nature regulated; and Compliance with ſuch Abridgments or Regulations is a Branch of that Obedience, which every *Subject* owes to the *Law of Nature* Itſelf.

But, "how ſhall the *Meaſures* of the Magiſtrate's Authority and the Subject's Liberty be mutually adjuſted?" This is indeed a Queſtion of great Moment, and ſuch as might well deſerve to be very ſolemnly debated, were we to bear a Part in a Conſultation about erecting a *New* Form of Government. But in

Truth, this is a Queſtion, with the Diſcuſſion whereof private Perſons, under Governments *actually conſtituted*, have nothing to do; as being *already determined* to their Hands. For, after all our Speculations, the Obligations lying on the Members of any Community *as ſuch*, muſt be meaſured by the *Laws* of *That* Community. *Theſe* are at once the Standards of the Magiſtrate's Authority, and of the Liberty of the Subject: *Theſe* are the declared Will of the *whole* Society; and muſt determine that of every Member of it. A Liberty to oppoſe his own private Will to that of the Publick, and to reſiſt thoſe Perſons who are entruſted with the Execution of it, is no Part of that Liberty, which *any* Society can allow its Members: Nor can it be taken by any *Subject* without a Violation of the Duty he owes to the Government that protects him; to himſelf as greatly intereſted in its Peace and Good Order; and eſpecially to that Being, whoſe Providence *ruleth in the Kingdom of Men, and giveth it to whomſoever He will.*

Legal Liberty, then, is all that can be *demanded* by Members of Society; and more than this cannot *conſiſtently* be *deſired* by Any, who are willing to enjoy the Benefits of Government.

vernment. 'Tis true, "You may think yourſelf aggrieved by ſome of the *Laws* in Being; Or, "You may diſlike ſomething in the *Form* of Government you live under;" Or perhaps, "Something in the Conduct of the *Perſons* ſet over you is not as it ſhould be: And ſurely, a Liberty of providing for the Redreſs of *one's own* particular Grievances, in the moſt compendious Way; of ſupplying the Defects of an imperfect Conſtitution; or however, of cenſuring what appears faulty, and repreſenting Things and Perſons *as being what they really are*; muſt be deſireable at leaſt, if not allowable." So indeed the Caſe may appear upon a *partial* View of it. And thus much muſt be granted, that, where by the ſtanding Rules of the Conſtitution ſome Perſons are entruſted with certain Degrees of Liberty, or, to ſpeak more properly, certain Meaſures of *Power*, for any of the Purpoſes hinted at; the Exerciſe of ſuch Power, by the proper Perſons, on neceſſary Occaſions, and in a legal Manner, is not only allowable but commendable. But, what if *every* Member of the Community ſhould aſſume a Liberty of redreſſing his own apprehended, or even real, Grievances; of inſulting the Final Determinations of the Supreme Authority; of ſitting in Judgment upon the Actions of his Governours; of treating with Indignity thoſe Stations and Characters which the Conſtitution holds Sacred; of ſowing the Seeds of Diſcontent, and fomenting Rebellion againſt them: This ſurely is a Liberty, which no Man would wiſh to ſee *generally* aſſumed; though, if it is allowable to *one*, it muſt be allowable to *all* in the ſame Circumſtances: It is indeed a Liberty to defeat the very Ends of Government; and muſt ſoon reduce us to that State, from the Miſeries of which it was one principal Deſign of Government to reſcue and protect us.

From what has been ſuggeſted we may in ſome Meaſure collect, how our Freedom ſtands as we are *Men*; and this both in our *Perſonal* Capacity as we are *Individuals*, and in our *Social* Capacity as we are *Subjects*. But we are further concerned to enquire into the State of it in *each* reſpect as we are *Chriſtians*.

It has been juſt hinted above, that our common Parents by aſſuming a Liberty to which they had no Title, loſt that Liberty, of which they were in Poſſeſſion. And, in Fact, they thereby ſubjected, not only themſelves, but all their Poſterity, to the worſt Kind of Dominion, that of Luſt and Appetite,

tite, of Sin and Death. Here then with Joy and Gratitude we proclaim, that [a] *We whom the Son hath made Free, are Free indeed.* We are Free from the Rigour and Condemnation of the *Law of Works*; from the heavy Burden of *Jewiſh* Rites and Obſervances; from the Tyranny of our own Luſts; and from [b] *that Fear of Death*, both Temporal and Eternal, which muſt otherwiſe *all our Life-Time have kept us in Bondage.* From all theſe this *Law of the Spirit of Life* has vindicated Us into *the glorious Liberty of the Sons of GOD.* Theſe are Immunities great and truly valuable; and of theſe we *Chriſtians* may juſtly glory. But ſtill, if we would inherit the *Privileges*, we muſt pay the cheerful *Obedience*, of *Sons.* If we are [c] *made free from Sin, we are*, by an additional Obligation, *become Servants to GOD.* Our Chriſtian Profeſſion is far from giving us an *unbounded* Liberty of Thinking or Acting. We muſt [d] *bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of CHRIST:* And [e] *not henceforth live unto ourſelves, but unto Him that died for us and roſe again.*

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a John VIII. 36. b Heb. II. 15. c Rom. VI. 22.
d 2 Cor. X. 5. e Ib. V. 15.

Not but that, even in *this* Reſpect, *Chriſtianity* eminently diſplays itſelf as being, what it is emphatically called, [a] *the perfect Law of Liberty*. For, after all the late Boaſts of the Sufficiency of our Underſtandings, the Rectitude of our Wills, and the Goodneſs of our Affections; Every one of us, who attends to what paſſes within him, muſt *feel*, that his Underſtanding greatly *needs* Information, his Will Direction, and his Affections at once Reſtraint from Evil, and Incitement to Good. And, to a Creature in *ſuch* a Situation, can it give any *juſt* Cauſe of Complaint, that his Creator (a Being of infinite Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs) ſhould call upon him for *the Obedience of Faith* to a Diſcovery of the moſt important Truths; the Readineſs of his Will to accept a Propoſal of the higheſt Good; the Compliance of his Affections with the moſt engaging Motives; and, in ſhort, the Concurrence of all his Faculties with the benign Influences of *the Spirit of Grace?* The ſelf-ſufficient *Deiſt* may call ſuch a Proceeding an Infringement upon his Freedom of Thinking, of Choice, of Action. But the truly rational *Chriſtian* will with humble Thankfulneſs embrace ſuch an Infringement as only limits his

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[a] Jam. I. 25.

Freedom by enlightening his Underſtanding, and denies him no Liberty but that of Deſtroying himſelf.

Such is the State of *Chriſtian Liberty* in our *Perſonal* Capacity. With regard to *Civil Societies*, Chriſtianity, being intended for the Religion of *all Nations*, is (I conceive) in *Civil* Matters adapted to the Conſtitution of each, without attempting the Subverſion of any. It *takes* the Laws of each Community, to which it offers itſelf, as it *finds* them: And as it gives ſuch as embrace it no Exemption from the *juſt* Reſtraints of Government, ſo neither does it deprive them of any *Legal* Privileges or Immunities of which they were antecedently poſſeſſed. But, though Chriſtianity has not *altered* the *Meaſures*, it has however greatly *enforced* the *Duty*, of Obedience to the *Higher Powers*. It teaches us, [a] *that the Powers that be are ordained of GOD:* It requires *Subjection to them from every Soul*, as *to the Ordinance of GOD*; and urges the *Neceſſity* of it, not only upon Prudential Conſiderations, *but alſo for Conſcience ſake:* It allows no *Liberty of private Revenge*; none of illegal or tumultuous Redreſs of Grievances; none of *deſpiſing Dominion* or *ſpeaking Evil of Dignities:* It condemns, in very ſtrong Terms, all *Reſiſting of the Supreme Powers,* or *Taking the Sword* againſt thoſe who are regularly commiſſioned by them: It has not, by minutely pointing out *excepted* Caſes, and ſhewing Men *how near* they may approach to the Confines of Sin without falling into it, *invited* Human Nature, of itſelf more than ſufficiently inclined, to Sedition and Rebellion: But, by requiring its Profeſſors in general to [a] *ſtudy to be quiet,* and its Teachers to [b] *put them in mind to be ſubject to Principalities and Powers,* It has at once beſt provided for its own favourable Reception, and for the ſocial Happineſs of Mankind.

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[a] Rom. XIII. 1—6.

I muſt not cloſe this Head without conſidering the State of our Liberty, as we are *Members* of that *Society,* which is moſt properly *Chriſtian*; and how it is affected by our becoming Subjects of *CHRIST*'s *ſpiritual* Kingdom: A *Kingdom,* which, though not [c] OF *this World,* either with regard to its Origin or its Conſummation, yet plainly appears intended by its Divine Founder to have a real Exiſtence, *as a Viſible Society,* IN this World; and as ſuch to have viſible Offices, Ordinances, and Adminiſtrations; and theſe conducted by *Perſons* regularly *called* and commiſſioned for that Purpoſe: to whom He has delegated ſo much *Authority* (and by Conſequence, ſo far *limited* the *Freedom* of others) as the Nature and Ends of their Inſtitution require.

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[a] 1 Theſſ. IV. 11. [b] Tit. III. 1. [c] Joh. XVIII. 36.

What thoſe Ends are for which the *Chriſtian Church* and *Chriſtian Miniſtry* were inſtituted, may eaſily be learned from ſuch Paſſages as relate to the Inſtitution itſelf. Where (we find) Chriſtianity conſiders Mankind in general as being [a] *Children*, both on Account of their Want of ſome Inſtruction, and the Danger they are in of being *toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine*: And ſuch with regard to *Divine* Truths we, all of us, in Fact, *naturally* are. Accordingly, among the various *Gifts which CHRIST gave unto Men*, the many gracious Proviſions He made for the Exigences of our Nature, *He gave ſome Apoſtles, ſome Prophets, ſome Evangeliſts, ſome Paſtors and Teachers; For the Perfecting of the Saints, unto the Work of the Miniſtry, unto the Edifying of the Body of CHRIST: Till we all come into the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of GOD, unto a perfect Man, unto the*

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[a] Eph. IV. 8, 11, 12, 13, 14.

Meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of CHRIST. From which Paſſage compared with others, particularly thoſe wherein *Decency* and *Order* in the Publick Offices are required to be provided for without being particularly defined, the leaſt that can be collected muſt be thus much; That the Inſtitution we are conſidering, was intended for the Propagation of the *Knowledge of the Son of* God, and Preſervation of the *One Faith* of His Goſpel; for the *Edification* and Eſtabliſhment of particular Members of *His Body* in the *Fundamental* Doctrines of It; and for the Maintenance of Decency and Regularity in the Sacred Offices of the Church. If therefore we will ſuppoſe Chriſtianity to be a *conſiſtent* Scheme; as on the one Hand, all the *Liberty* that can well be reconciled to the Proſecution of theſe Ends, may be allowed to *private* Chriſtians; ſo on the other, whatever *Authority* is neceſſary to the Attainment of them, muſt be ſuppoſed to be entruſted with thoſe Perſons, whoſe Office and Duty it is to provide for and promote them.

Here then the Liberty of particular Chriſtians may be conſidered with reference either to *Private Judgment*, or to ſuch *Religious Acts* as are of a *Publick* Nature. As to *Pri-*

vate Judgment; the *Liberty* of this is unqueſtionably the *Right*, nay (I add) the *Exerciſe* of it, in Proportion to their Abilities and Opportunities, is the *Duty*, of all Chriſtians. I ſay, *in Proportion to their Abilities*; becauſe it is material to obſerve, in relation to Matters of *Religion* as well as *all others*, that the *Exerciſe* of private Judgment ought not in Reaſon or *Prudence* to be extended beyond the *Power* of it. If Men will inſiſt on a Liberty of *exerciſing themſelves in Matters too high for them*, and of rejecting that Aſſiſtance which God has provided for them; they not only return back into that State of *Uncertainty* and *Fluctuation*, out of which the Chriſtian Miniſtry was intended to deliver them, but become doubly chargeable, in God's Account, with ſuch Errours and Miſconduct, as their Vanity and Neglect of His Ordinance ſhall occaſion. However, as private Judgment, ſo long as it is really *Private*, is a Matter purely *Perſonal*; Men are accountable for it to *GOD*, and to Him *only*. But the Caſe of every Thing to be tranſacted in *Publick* is very different; as particularly, What *Doctrines* ſhall be *taught*, what *Uſages obſerved*, what *Perſons admitted to teach* the one and to *officiate* in the other, &c. Theſe are Matters of a *Social* Concern:

They muſt therefore be ſubject to ſuch Regulations as ſhall to the Society appear neceſſary to ſecure the Ends of its Inſtitution: And ſuch Regulations, when made, become *proper Limitations* of private Liberty.

True indeed it is, that all Men, all Bodies of Men, are *fallible*; they *may* require the Profeſſion of Doctrines, or they *may* enjoin Conformity with Obſervances, contrary to God's Word: And when this is the Caſe, or when to private Chriſtians, upon the beſt Judgment they are able to form, this *appears to be* the Caſe; the Rule to ſuch Perſons is, *To obey GOD rather than Man*. The Obligations we are under as Members of Christ's Church are all founded on our antecedent Obligation to Christ as the Head of it; and therefore, we may be ſure, ought never to ſuperſede or overrule it. But ſtill; if our Bleſſed Lord by founding His Church, and appointing a regular Miniſtry in it, has not *taken away* from its Members the Liberty of private Judgment, He has however graciouſly *directed* and *aſſiſted* them in the Exerciſe of it. And ſurely They are concerned, in order to expreſs a due Regard to their Saviour's Inſtitution, as well as to partake of the Advantages of it, to proceed with Caution, and to deal fairly with themſelves: Not condemning what has the Sanction of publick Authority without an impartial Examination; nor miſtaking the Suggeſtions of Paſſion or Prejudice for Dictates of Conſcience. Thoſe muſt be *Doctrines*, not only of *undoubted Truth*, but of *conſiderable Importance*, for the Sake of which *private* Chriſtians can be excuſed in publickly oppoſing the Determinations, and breaking the Peace and Harmony, of the Church. And as to mere *Ceremonies*; nothing leſs than [a] *Conviction* of the *Unlawfulneſs* of the Thing enjoined will juſtify a Non-Compliance, with the Injunctions of *lawful Authority*. Notions of *Expediency*, or Hopes of *better Edification*, will by no means reach the Caſe. In all well-regulated Societies, Matters of Decency and Expediency, of Order and Government muſt be referred, not to every Man's *Private Judgment*, but to the Determination of *Publick Wiſdom*. A Liberty beyond this muſt be productive of endleſs *Diſorder* and *Confuſion*: It cannot therefore have [b] *GOD for its Author*; nor be [c] *That Liberty*

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[a] See Bp. *Sanderſon*'s Sermon on Rom. 14. 23. Sect. 28.
Abp. *Sharp*'s Caſe of a doubting Conſcience.
Dr. *Rogers*'s Review, Part 2. Chap. 9. Sect. 2.

[b] 1 Cor. XIV. 33. [c] Gal. V. 1.

wherewith CHRIST hath made his Subjects *Free.*

Let me only add, that if private Chriſtians muſt act according to their own beſt Judgment, ſo muſt the Church as a Society act likewiſe. And, if the former ſhall take to themſelves a Liberty of profeſſing, and even of teaching and propagating, ſuch Doctrines, as are in the Society's Judgment ſubverſive of the Chriſtian Covenant; or of introducing ſuch *Cuſtoms* into Divine Worſhip as [a] *the Churches of GOD are Strangers to:* let their private Judgment be what it will, the Society, on the other Hand, muſt certainly be allowed a *Liberty* of providing for its *own Preſervation,* and for the Security and Promotion of thoſe Ends for which it was inſtituted: Otherwiſe we ſhall aſſert to *particular Members* a Liberty deſtructive, not of the Liberty only, but of the very *Being,* of the *Society itſelf.*

By this Time, I hope, it may in general appear, what *that Liberty* is which we can *juſtly challenge,* or *reaſonably deſire,* as *Men* or as *Chriſtians;* as *Subjects* under *Civil Government,* or as *Members* of the *Church of CHRIST:* A Liberty indeed, in each of theſe Reſpects, ſubject to *ſome* Reſtraints; but ſuch Reſtraints as, whilſt they limit and encloſe our Freedom, do alſo moſt effectually fence and ſecure it. This has in Part already appeared, but may perhaps more ſenſibly affect us, if we recollect, as was propoſed,

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[a] 1 Cor. XI. 16.

II. *Secondly*, The *pernicious Conſequences* of *Liberty* purſued *too far*; as *exemplified* in the Times, which the preſent Solemnity brings to our Remembrance.

And here, it were eaſy to point out the many flagrant *Abuſes* and *fatal Effects* of Liberty, in each of the Views under which the preſent Subject has been conſidered. But the Two General Heads of *Religion* and *Civil Government* will afford far more Evidence in the Caſe before us, than can here be diſtinctly produced.

To begin with Abuſes of Liberty in *Religion*. A *Name* never more uſed, never more vilely proſtituted, than in the Times now under our Conſideration! in which Villanies of all Kinds were attempted, and by a juſt Providence permitted to be accompliſhed, under the ſanctified Pretence of *Religion*, and *in the Name of the LORD*. In what Manner theſe

Good Men provided for the Honour of GOD and of His Holy Religion, we ſhall ſoon ſee. One of the firſt Steps taken towards the Work of *Subverſion*, was to withdraw the Attention and Regards of the People from their proper *Paſtors*. Accordingly, Men of all Capacities and Occupations were invited to *think for themſelves*, and encouraged to determine the moſt important Queſtions, without conſulting thoſe, who were by Study prepared, by Profeſſion ſet apart, and by Commiſſion authorized, to direct and inſtruct them. The Invitation was flattering; and, as uſually happens in like Caſes, thoſe who had the worſt Title to ſuch Encouragement were moſt forward to embrace it. Nor could this Liberty of *Judging for themſelves* long ſatisfy theſe Men's Vanity: They ſoon took upon them, what their Abetters had never deſigned for them, a Liberty of ſetting up for *Teachers to others*. *When they came together* to the ſacred Offices, They who might more properly *have occupied the Place of the Unlearned*, muſt needs *every one* of them *have his Pſalm*, *every one his Doctrine*, *every one his Interpretation*, and not a few their pretended *Revelations*. The *Annals* of thoſe Times, and even the Complaints of their own [a] Writers, will not ſuffer us to forget, what *malicious* Uſe was then made of this licentious Freedom with the *ſacred Oracles!* what monſtrous Perverſions of the *Goſpel of Peace* to the Purpoſes of Rebellion and Parricide! what horrid Blaſphemies were then broached and propagated! Whilſt every Perſon was admitted to officiate, every Doctrine to be taught, every Form of Worſhip to be uſed, but ſuch as had the *Recommendation* (I mean, what *ſhould have been* the Recommendation) of being appointed by *Lawful Authority.* — Where theſe Things ended, You well know, That ancient, and venerable *Order* of Men, which had *preſided* in the Chriſtian Church ever ſince it had a Being, fell a Sacrifice to the blind Rage of miſguided Zealots and Enthuſiaſts! That grave and decent *Service,* with which our Forefathers had been greatly edified, and had *worſhipped the LORD in the Beauty of Holineſs,* was trampled under Foot by theſe our new *Reformers!* And into the Place of theſe pretended Corruptions were received — what ſhall I ſay? what indeed *can* be ſaid? ſince not any *determinate* Form of Worſhip or Polity ſucceeded; but a Medley of Sects, dividing and ſubdividing into an endleſs Variety of ſenſeleſs Opinions and Modes of Worſhip, unworthy of God, deſtructive of pure Religion, and highly diſhonourable to the injured Name of Proteſtantiſm!

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[a] *Edwards*'s *Gangræna,* &c. See alſo a late ſeaſonable Tract, intituled, *The miſerable and diſtracted State of Religion upon the Downfal of the Church Eſtabliſhment.* Printed for *J. Stagg.* 1736.

But ſurely, whatever elſe a deluded People might forfeit, this was the Way to that *Liberty of Conſcience*, for which they expreſſed ſo ardent a Zeal. — *Liberty of Conſcience* was indeed what moſt of them at firſt profeſſed to have in View: But never were Men more out of the Road to it. When once they forſook its moſt faithful Guardian, the *Church of England*, they took Leave of *true Liberty* together with it; and ſoon perceived they had been flying from an *imaginary* Spiritual Tyranny to a *real* one in all its various Forms; under Men, who, while *out of Power* talked of Nothing but *Forbearance*, *Moderation*, and *the Spirit of Meekneſs*; but, when *in Power*, found out a Meaning, wherein to explain theſe *good Words* to others, very different from that, in which they had demanded the Benefit of them for themſelves. Each of the Perſuaſions in its Turn had its *Covenants* or its *Engagements*, each its Engine of one Kind or other, for fettering the Judgments, and torturing the Conſciences of Men. In the mean Time, many obſerving the unhappy Conſequences of a wanton Departure from a *well-tempered* Authority, became prepared to repoſe themſelves on *any* that ſhould firſt offer itſelf to them: And accordingly great Numbers, after having *ſtrained at* the Power of the *Engliſh* Hierarchy, made no Difficulty of ſubmitting to the Dominion of *Popery*. Whilſt others took this Opportunity of propagating, with too much Succeſs, the yet more *ſlaviſh* Tenets of *Deiſm*, *Fataliſm*, and *Atheiſm*. — Theſe were *ſome* of the Bleſſed Effects of that *Liberty of Thinking* which was then compleatly tried: as compleatly (I mean) as it well *can* be tried? And methinks they are ſuch, as ſhould not make a *ſober* People fond of *repeating* the Experiment!

The Diſtractions in the *State* did in thoſe Days (as more or leſs they always will) very remarkably keep pace with thoſe in the *Church*. The plauſible Pretence in one Caſe was that of *Reforming Corruptions*; in the other, that of *Redreſſing Grievances*. And, as we have ſeen, how they ſucceeded in the Work of *Reformation*; I need hardly enlarge on any Particulars of the *Redreſs* they effected, which both in the Progreſs and the Iſſue very exactly reſembled It. The loweſt of the People were encouraged to make free with the Characters, and to paſs Sentence on the Conduct, of their Governours: *Their Tongues*, at leaſt, *were their own*, and they had, in reſpect of thoſe, *no Lord over them*. To enflame their Zeal, Jealouſies were artfully ſown and induſtriouſly ſpread among them, of dangerous Deſigns upon their *Liberties* and *Properties*: *Things* apt enough, and with Reaſon, to be valued by Mankind; and no wonder then if their *Names*, however miſapplied, gave the ambitious and diſcontented an Opportunity of drawing much better Men into their ſubverſive Projects. Whatever Occaſions had been really given, their alleviating Circumſtances, at leaſt where the King was concerned, ought ſurely to have been taken into the Account: nor ſhould We try them by Laws not then in Being. However, it ſoon appeared, that the great Grievance to be redreſſed (I mean, in the Intention of *too many*, though not of them *all)* was the *Conſtitution itſelf*. For when all their other Grounds of Complaint were removed; when their Prince had given Way to their Encroachments on his Royal Prerogative, in a Manner that demonſtrated, how tenderly

He loved his People, and how ardently He deſired to make them eaſy and happy; were theſe *Patriots* ſatisfied? — Every Conceſſion ſerved only for an Invitation to ſome more extravagant Demand. From Grievances ſucceſsfully repreſented they proceeded to enſnaring Petitions: from Petitions graciouſly heard, and granted (as far as they could with *Honeſty*, farther than they could with *Safety*, be granted) they were emboldened to draw up ſeditious Remonſtrances: Remonſtrances within Doors ſoon produced Remonſtrances in the Field, and at the Head of Armies, againſt their Sovereign. The Time would fail me to enumerate the various Acts of Hypocriſy, Treachery, Violence, Cruelty, which made Way for that enormous *One*, into which they were all ſummed up, as on *This* Day! — A Fact attended with every Circumſtance of Aggravation and Horrour! May the heinous Guilt of it never be viſited on Us or our Poſterity!

Liberty ſtill was the Cry of the infatuated Multitude. To ſecure *This*, as they flattered themſelves, they had now *removed all the ancient Landmarks* of the Conſtitution, and that inſupportable Grievance, the Monarchy itſelf. But when they had accompliſhed all this;

did they find themſelves in *Poſſeſſion* of what they had purſued through ſo much Sedition and Bloodſhed? Was the Nation *more free* and flouriſhing, or particular Perſons *more ſecure* in their Properties, than they had been *before?* Could they ſpeak for themſelves they would tell us, "The Reverſe of all this was true." When once a few crafty Leaders had, by the Aſſiſtance of a deluded Populace, got that *Power* into their own Hands, which they had inveighed againſt in thoſe of others; they ſoon made it appear, what Kind of Liberty they had cut out for themſelves, and how very different an one they had in Reſerve for their Followers: For themſelves, a Liberty to oppreſs, decimate, plunder, and deſtroy whomſoever they found too honeſt to become ſubſervient to their Iniquities, or rich enough to fall a ſacrifice to their Avarice: For their Followers, a Liberty *to go forth, ſuch as were for Death, to the Death; ſuch as were for the Sword, to the Sword;* and *ſuch as were for the Captivity, to the Captivity.* New and unheard-of Taxes were then arbitrarily impoſed; New Courts of Judicature erected; New Methods of Torture invented and exerciſed. *Civil Property* could not long continue ſecure from grievous *Compoſitions for*

Delinquency, after *Church Lands* had been invaded by their rapacious *Ordinances*. And though ſuch as had adhered to the Royal Cauſe were on ſome Occaſions diſtinguiſhed by *peculiar* Marks of Reſentment; yet theſe were far from being the *only* Sufferers. Thoſe, who had been among the firſt Fomenters of the Nation's Diſorders, were now ſome of the deepeſt Sharers in its Calamities: They now in earneſt *felt* thoſe Grievances, which they had *only complained* of before; when their Rebellion againſt a Prince, whom they unrighteouſly accuſed of *chaſtiſing them with Whips*, had, by God's juſt Judgment, ſubjected them to the extreme Tyranny of an Uſurper, who really *chaſtiſed them with Scorpions*.

Such were the deplorable Circumſtances, under which this Nation then groaned, both in its *Religious* and *Civil* Capacity; and ſuch will always be the Conſequences of Men's carrying their Notions and Purſuits of Liberty *too far*, to the Ruin of Order and Government, and *with them* of all *valuable* Liberty itſelf. — It remains then,

III. *Laſtly*, That a *ſuitable Application* be made of the foregoing Particulars.

And, how can we better apply what has been ſaid, than by thence learning to ſet a *juſt Value* upon that *Legal Liberty* we of this Nation enjoy: *Not meddling with thoſe that are given to Change*; nor ſuffering ourſelves to be deluded by the flattering Hopes of farther *Liberty*, into any Attempts tending to the Subverſion of our excellent Conſtitution, in *either* of its Branches; which muſt ſooner or later end in the Ruin of *Both*. And

Firſt, With regard to the *State*: Let the Remembrance of thoſe *unexpected Lengths*, to which the Iniquities and Diſtractions we have been reviewing were carried, teach us to beware of the *Firſt Motions* towards National Troubles.

The Beginning of Strife, eſpecially between Prince and People, or between two powerful Parties of the latter, *is as when one letteth out Water*: and 'tis impoſſible to ſay, where the Breach may end, or the Inundation be ſtopped. I am willing to believe, no very conſiderable Number of thoſe Perſons, who *firſt* engaged in the Meaſures we have been recollecting, had any Thoughts of taking ſuch Steps as they ſoon after found, or *thought* they found, neceſſary. But, alas! when well-ſettled Conſtitutions are once unadviſedly broken in upon;

when Men's Paſſions are heated; and their Jealouſies ſet to work; no Man can foreſee, how far thoſe about him, or even *himſelf*, may afterwards be carried. The Gradation was, by our Forefathers, found but too natural, from *Backbiting* and Calumniating their Governours, to *Whiſperings* and ſecret Cabals againſt them; from *Whiſperings* to *Swellings* and Menaces; from *Swellings* to *Tumults* and riotous Aſſemblings: whence the Tranſition became almoſt unavoidable to open and avowed *Rebellion:* till after having paſſed through a Sea of Blood of their *Fellow-Subjects*, they ſcrupled not at laſt to embrew their guilty Hands in that of their *anointed Sovereign.*

Now all theſe Things were our Examples; to the Intent we ſhould not luſt after evil Things as they alſo luſted: that we ſhould not indulge a wanton Humour of diſturbing Settlements, but ſhould know when we are well. We ſhould hence learn the Folly, as well as the Iniquity, of giving Way to the Suggeſtions of Spleen and Reſentment againſt our Superiors, and of engaging ſo far in Party-Diſputes, as to put it out of our Power either to retreat with Safety, or to proceed with Innocence. Let us reverence the *Laws* as the beſt Preſervatives of our *Liberties*, and cheerfully pay all that Honour and Obedience to our Gracious *Sovereign*, which Reaſon and Religion demand from us. The crying Sin we are this Day aſſembled to lament, and the Calamities that ſucceeded it, are a ſtanding Admonition to us againſt raſhly crediting Thoſe, who *promiſe us Liberty*, but would in all Probability, perhaps without being themſelves aware of it, ſoon *bring us into Bondage*.

Give me Leave to ſubjoin the like Caution, with regard to the *Eccleſiaſtical* Part of our Conſtitution, againſt the like enſnaring Pretences of *farther Liberty* and a *purer Reformation*.

Reformation is confeſſedly a glorious Work, where It is *indeed* wanted; where the Corruptions complained of are *real* ones; where the Advantages *reaſonably* expected will counterbalance the Hazards attending all *merely Human* Attempts this Way; where it is *begun* regularly and by proper Authority; where it is *conducted* not only by warm Hearts but cool Heads; and *concluded* by ſuch as know how to *build* as well as how to *pull down*. *Such* a Reformation this Church and Nation was once bleſſed with. But when ſome of our Forefathers, not content with Throwing off the Burden of *Romiſh* Ceremonies, and their ſtill leſs tolerable Superſtitions and Idolatries, went forward, in their *exceſſive* Zeal, to *reform away* Decency and Solemnity and Primitive Uſage; the Conſequences were ſuch as I need not *now* repeat in *Narration*; and ſuch as, I preſume, no Lover of his Country would wiſh to ſee repeated in *Fact* and Experience.

But our *preſent Reformers* are better acquainted with the Nature and Principles of Religious Liberty, than their Forefathers were: *They* would make a very different Uſe of Power if it were in *Their* Hands. Nay ſome of them (for it is far from being the Language of them *all*) would fain perſuade us, they mean *no Harm* to the Church of *England* in their Attempts to deprive it of every *Human* Security. I am not diſpoſed to queſtion the Sincerity of ſuch Profeſſions. Yet (I hope) we may have Leave to remember, that for Men to *talk of making* a good Uſe of the Power they want, and to *make* a good Uſe of the Power they enjoy, *have been* very different Things. And, had we not ſo good Evidence of this Truth from *Experience*, yet a little Jealouſy might be excuſed from the apparent *Temper* of ſome late Champions of *Liberty*; whoſe *Uſe* of its Name is not even ſo much as *a Cloke* of their unkind Purpoſes towards us. For ſurely, no great Matters can be depended on from the *Tolerating* Spirit of thoſe Perſons, were *We* upon Terms of ſupplicating it, who can allow themſelves in all the Arts of Miſrepreſentation, in order to blacken the Reputations of thoſe Advocates for our Faith while living, and their Memories when dead, who had ſet them Examples of a *real Moderation* in every Reſpect, the Force of their Reaſonings only excepted.

After all, we might aſk, "What there is in the Church eſtabliſhed, that calls ſo loudly for a Reformation?" But there is the leſs Occaſion (would the Time permit) to deſcend to the *Particulars* of this Challenge, not only becauſe *Theſe* have been over and over fully vindicated, but becauſe ſome of the preſent Friends to Liberty (its *only* Friends as they would be thought) are pleaſed to declare openly againſt the *Whole* of this, and all other *Religious Settlements*, *as ſuch*. To ſatisfy *Them*, (it ſeems) all Incloſures muſt be thrown down, all Unity of Faith and Uniformity in Worſhip given up, as of no Moment; and nothing required as a Term of *Communion*, or even as a Qualification for the *Teachers* in Religion, but the Profeſſion, "that JESUS IS THE CHRIST," or (as they ſometimes ſpeak, more indefinitely) of *what is neceſſary to denominate a Man a Chriſtian.* I ſtay not *now* to examine, how far this Scheme is reconcileable with the Directions, which *CHRIST* and *His Apoſtles* have left us, relating to the *Chriſtian Church*; nor how far it may be really *practicable.* But we muſt be allowed to enquire, What *Conſequences* are to be expected from this *thorough* Reformation, ſuppoſing they *could* be gratified? They will *promiſe us a Glorious State of univerſal Liberty.* But, is it to be imagined, that a Nation, retaining the leaſt Concern about Religion, could *for any Time* continue in ſuch as State as this? Would all Chriſtians be at once ſet at Liberty from their Paſſions and their Prejudices? And particularly, would the *Teachers* of Religion (for *Teachers,* I ſuppoſe, there muſt be ſo long as there is *Religion*) be by theſe means diveſted of that *Luſt of Power,* from which Some at preſent *affect* to be under ſuch dreadful Apprehenſions? Alas! the *Denominations* of the contending Parties might be changed, but the *Contentions* themſelves would remain as fierce as ever. We ſhould ſoon have Teacher ſetting up againſt Teacher; each propoſing a different Interpretation of the *One Article,* and a different Account of *what is neceſſary to denominate a Man a Chriſtian*; each zealous for the Prevalence of his own; and probably the more ſo, in Proportion to the Hopes, he might flatter himſelf with, of being able to draw the, *then vacant*, publick Encouragements towards it. In the mean while, thoſe of the *People*, whom this Scheme ſhould find in a Poſture of Indifference to all Religion, would ſoon be advanced by it into *the Seat of the Scornful*; whilſt it would drive the more devout into the Arms of the *Romiſh* Emiſſary: Of the reſt, ſome would fall in with one Leader, ſome with another; *one* declaring for *Paul*, *another* for *Apollos*, a *third* for *Cephas*, and a *fourth* diſclaiming all ſubordinate Authority or Inſtruction, and inſiſting on his *immediate* Relation to *CHRIST*. The Diſtractions muſt needs be, *for ſome Time*, moſt deplorable; and the Iſſue of them, if our Situation with reſpect to our *Neighbours* be conſidered, probably not much leſs ſo. Only of thus much we may be well aſſured; that no Iſſue of them could be more dreaded by the Enemies, or more heartily prayed for by the Friends (I ſay not, of *Religion* only, but) of all *valuable Liberty*, than a Revival of that excellent Eſtabliſhment, which as on *This* Day fell a Sacrifice, with its faithful *Defender*, the *Royal Martyr*, at the Head of it; which was ſince, by GOD's good Providence, wonderfully *reſtored*, and is ſtill graciouſly *continued* to us; and which, if we are content to learn Wiſdom at the Expence of our Forefathers, we ſhall not again wantonly caſt away from us.

To conclude. The Conſtitution we live under is, in both its Branches ſo happily ſituated, as to partake of the beneficial Influences of a *juſt Authority* and a *ſober Liberty*, and to avoid the Extremes of *Tyranny* on one Hand, and *Licentiouſneſs* on the other: A Conſtitution, under which we may be as ſecure, as any thing *Human* can ſecure us, in our Perſons and our Properties, in our Lives, and (which are juſtly yet dearer to us) our *Conſciences:* A Conſtitution, by a due Improvement of the Advantages whereof, we may be *eaſy* in this World, and *happy* in a far better. — Let us then at once ſhew ourſelves worthy of theſe Bleſſings, and ſecure the Continuance of them, by [a] *rendering unto Ceſar the Things which are Ceſar's, and unto GOD the Things that are GOD's:* Expreſſing our Affection for *our Country*, by *praying for its Peace*, and by contributing our *honeſt* Induſtry in our *proper* Stations, toward its *Proſperity*; and our Zeal for our *Holy Religion*, by a conſtant and devout Attendance on its Worſhip and its Ordinances, and by adorning it with all the Virtues and Graces of a *truly Chriſtian Life.* — Schemes of farther *Liberty*, or greater *Perfection*, look plauſible in *Theory* and inviting at a *Diſtance*; and might perhaps anſwer our Expectations tolerably well upon a nearer View, were both the principal Conductors of them, and their ſubordinate Inſtruments, ſuch purely *rational*, ſuch intirely *diſpaſſionate* Beings, as unexperienced Projectors generally preſume upon finding them to be. But, 'till this is the Caſe; that is, 'till we arrive at *that Jeruſalem which is above*, and which alone is *perfectly*, becauſe it alone could be *ſecurely*, *Free*; let us cheerfully comply with thoſe Reſtraints, which our preſent Situation renders neceſſary for us: And, [a] *whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the ſame Rule, let us mind the ſame Thing.*

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[a] Matth. XXII. 21.

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[a] Phil. III. 16.

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SERMON

Preached before the
UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD*,
AT
St. *MARY*'s,

On *Wedneſday*, *January* 9. 1744-5.

Being the *Sixth* General *FAST*
Appointed to be kept
On Occaſion of the WAR.

The THIRD EDITION.

ry in our proper Stations; [illegible] Prof-
perity; and [illegible] Religion,
by a constant [illegible] Attendance on its
Worship and its Ordinances [illegible]
it is all the Virtue and [illegible]

[illegible]

ISAIAH LVIII. 3. part 1.

Wherefore have we faſted (ſay they) *and Thou ſeeſt not?* Wherefore *have we afflicted our Soul, and Thou takeſt no Knowledge?*

SCARCE any Thing appeared *more early*, or has all along been more diſtinguiſhable, in the Nature of fallen Man, than a certain *Reluctance*, which he diſcovers upon almoſt every Occaſion of Diſappointment or Uneaſineſs, againſt acknowledging or even ſuſpecting the Cauſe to be within himſelf. Nor is this obſervable only in *ſingle Perſons*, but often in *Parties*, and ſometimes in whole *Communities*, of Men. In the *Glory* of any Publick Succeſſes they can be very well contented to take their Share: But, when Affairs are leſs proſperous, we find them equally diſpoſed to renounce all

Pretenſions to the *Blame*; little ſolicitous where *that* may reſt, provided it be not brought *home to themſelves*.

The Paſſage before us will, I think, furniſh us with a remarkable Inſtance of what is here obſerved.—From ſeveral Parts of this ſublime Prophecy it appears, that the *Jewiſh* People were at this Time chargeable with many groſs Deviations from the Law of God, many abominable Corruptions both in Principle and Practice. Accordingly the *Prophet* is here ordered to [a] *cry aloud and not ſpare; to ſhew the People their Tranſgreſſion, and the Houſe of* Jacob *their Sins*. Such Information, one would imagine, might have been but little wanted in their Circumſtances. And yet, it ſeems, all this while, as if their Behaviour had been in every reſpect irreproachable, they could be very aſſiduous in performing the outward Acts of Devotion, and even familiar with their Maker in their Expreſſions of it. *They ſeek me daily* (ſaith God) *and delight to know my Ways; as a Nation that did Righteouſneſs, and forſook not the Ordinance of GOD; they aſk of me the Ordinances of Juſtice; they take Delight in approaching to GOD*. Nay, ſo inſenſible were they of their own Degeneracy, or ſo very little acquainted with God's Perfections, as to be at a Loſs to account for the Unſucceſsfulneſs of their former Addreſſes, and almoſt ready to aſcribe it to a Want either of Power or Goodneſs in the Deity. *Wherefore have we faſted,* ſaid they, *and Thou ſeeſt not? Wherefore have we afflicted our Soul, and Thou takeſt no Knowledge?* —Strange! that [a] *a ſinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, a Seed of Evil-Doers, Children that were Corrupters,* ſhould want an Anſwer to this Queſtion!—Let us, however, ſuſpend our Admiration till we have reflected a little, whether *ourſelves* may not be in ſome degree concerned in the foregoing Obſervation.

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[a] Iſaiah LVIII. 1, 2, 3.

We of this Nation have already *five ſeveral Times* preſented ourſelves before Almighty God; deprecating His Judgments of which we were juſtly afraid, and imploring His Bleſſing on the Counſels and Arms of our Sovereign: And, in order to do this with the greater Solemnity and the more Succeſs, we have (in Conformity with the pious Injunction of our Superiours, and with the Practice of the Church of God in all Ages) joined *Faſting* with our *Prayers* on theſe Occaſions. Of what Efficacy all this may have been, it becomes not us to pronounce. But, without attempting any Compariſon of our preſent Situation with that we were in at the Commencement of the War, or ſpecifying any Events that have occur'd in the Progreſs of it; without deſiring to rob God of the Glory of any of our Succeſſes, or thoſe brave *Men, that have hazarded their Lives unto the Death*, of our due Thanks for any ſeaſonable Deliverances or unexpected Advantages, which by His Bleſſing they have gained for us; I preſume, the Appointment of this *Sixth* Day of Humiliation will juſtify a Suppoſal, becauſe it implies an Acknowledgment, that our former Faſts have *not yet* procured for us *all* thoſe favourable Returns from Heaven, which we deſired and hoped for from them. And what now is the Uſe we make of this? In Juſtice to our Governours indeed, it ſhould be remembered, that they have in this very Appointment ſuggeſted the Conſideration, which ought always to be uppermoſt in our Thoughts on this Subject. But, is this *in fact* the View wherein we are moſt apt to conſider theſe Things? A little Converſation with Men *full* of *Political Schemes* will convince us of the Contrary. Talk, for inſtance, with *Many* of theſe; and You will hear much of the Perfi-

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[a] Iſai. I. 4.

dioufneſs

diouſneſs of ſome Neighbouring Powers, and the Inactivity and unſeaſonable Delays of others; of the Inſufficiency of Treaties in ſome former Reigns; and of the Encouragement given to our Enemies abroad by our Factions at home. Talk again with *Others*; and You will find our Misfortunes firſt greatly aggravated, and then aſcribed *intirely* to the Miſmanagement of Publick Affairs, and to the Weakneſs or the Wickedneſs of Perſons entruſted with the Direction of them. And, as to particular Enterprizes; when Men have charged the Failure of our ſanguine Expectations to the Impetuoſity of one Leader, or the Inexperience of another, perhaps the Unfaithfulneſs of a third, and the Want of a due Harmony between the principal Conductors in them all; they think they have given a *full* Solution of the reſpective Caſes, and trouble not themſelves with looking any *farther*: Thus widely differing in their *particular* Accounts; but All agreeing to *clear themſelves* of any Share in the Blame; and Moſt (I fear) *ſo far* varying from the Pattern in my Text, as to leave God and *Providence* quite out of their Calculations.

My Deſign in ſaying thus much is not (You will eaſily believe) to enter farther into Particulars little deſerving your Attention on this *pious* Occaſion. What I would obſerve upon the whole is, that, in reſting theſe Matters where we commonly do, our Enquiries *end* where they ought only to *begin*. Be the Faults on all Sides for the preſent *ſuppoſed* as great as even *Party-Vehemence* can repreſent them; yet the Reflections, in which we are moſt nearly intereſted, remain ſtill to be made. For (to uſe the Words of Holy [a] *Job) Who knoweth not in all theſe, that the Hand of the LORD hath wrought this?* The Folly, but eſpecially the Wickedneſs, of Men muſt indeed be charged to their own Hearts: But they cannot, either of them, *operate* farther or otherwiſe than GOD gives them *Leave*: To His *Permiſſion* therefore, if not *Direction*, we ſhould always refer the *Effects* they produce; and then attentively conſider, what Inſtruction He intends to convey to us by them. This is the Light in which the inſpired [b] Writers conſtantly teach us to conſider Caſes of this Kind. But we need go no farther than to the following very appoſite Paſſage of our Prophet [c] *Iſaiah: Who gave* Jacob

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[a] Job XII. 9.

[b] See in particular 2 Sam. XVI. 11. Prov. XVI. 4. Iſaiah XLV. 7. Amos III. 6.

[c] Iſai. XLII. 24, 25.

to the Spoil, and Iſrael *to the Robbers? Did not the* LORD, *He againſt whom they had ſinned? For they did not walk in His Way, neither were they obedient unto His Law. Therefore He hath poured upon him the Fury of His Anger, and the Strength of Battle; and it hath ſet him on Fire round about, yet he knew it not; and it hath burned him, yet he laid it not to Heart.* In which Words every People or Nation encompaſſed with the Dangers and expoſed to the Ravages of War, may diſtinctly read, "By *whoſe Appointment* it is that they find themſelves in ſuch a Situation; "*What* has been the *meritorious Cauſe* of it on their Part; and "*What* Kind of *Behaviour* every ſuch Diſpenſation demands from them.—They are to *lay it to Heart:* that is, to make ſerious Reflections upon it, and ſuitable Applications *to themſelves* from it. And, if to their other Preparations againſt the Dangers of their Country they have heretofore added ſolemn Addreſſes to Almighty God, they may well aſk themſelves in the Language of my Text (not by Way of *familiar Expoſtulation* with their Maker, but of *impartial Examination* of their own Conſciences) *Wherefore have we faſted, and* God *ſeeth not?*

Wherefore have we afflicted our Soul, and He *taketh no Knowledge?*

This then is the Uſe which I take Leave to make of theſe Words. And in order to adapt them to the more immediate Buſineſs of the preſent Solemnity, I ſhall apply them to *the Caſe of a Nation after repeated Faſts ſtill engaged in a doubtful and hazardous War*; and ſhall reduce what I would offer thereupon under the following Heads of Enquiry:

I. *Firſt*, To *what Reaſons any People* thus circumſtanced may *moſt probably* aſcribe the ſeeming Unſucceſsfulneſs of their former Faſts and Humiliations.

II. *Secondly*, How far *We of this Nation* have Cauſe to think ourſelves concern'd in any of the Caſes ſpecify'd. And, according as we may appear to be ſo,

III. *Thirdly*, What remains to be *done on our Part*, in order to recommend ourſelves more ſucceſsfully to the Divine Favour and Bleſſing for the Future.

I. The *Firſt* of theſe Enquiries muſt be entered upon with ſome *Caution*. For [a] *known unto* God, and to Him *only* with *infallible*

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[a] Acts XV. 18.

Certainty, *are all His Works from the Beginning of the World.* The Grounds of GOD's Proceedings, tho' in all Caſes juſt and right *in themſelves,* yet may in many Caſes be out of the Reach of *our Diſcernment:* And whenſoever they are ſo, they afford Matter for implicite Acquieſcence, rather than curious Examination, or bold Conjecture.

The Truth is, from the *preſent viſible* Diſpenſations of Providence towards *Individuals,* or even *Communities,* we cannot *always* form *unerring* Judgments concerning their *real* Situation in reſpect to the Favour of Heaven. The ſacred Hiſtory affords us more than one Inſtance of *Succeſs* granted to *ſinful Nations,* when the great Diſpoſer of all Events has thought fit to make uſe of them as *Scourges* for the Chaſtiſement of other ſinful Nations, or as *Inſtruments* in the Accompliſhment of ſome other leſs diſcernible Purpoſes of his Pleaſure. However, we more rarely find *Evil brought upon* any Perſons, or even *Good withholden from* them, in their *National* Capacity, but for ſome Cauſe or other *ſubſiſting on their Part.* And [a] *when the* LORD'*s Hand is* thus *lifted up,* He expects, that a Nation ſhould *ſee* and obſerve it: When the Reaſons of GOD's

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[a] Iſai. XXVI. 11.

Proceedings may with Probability be collected from any Circumſtances of the Community concerned; it will always be the Duty of ſuch a Community to enquire into, and attentively conſider, them.—To *Reaſons* of this Kind I would be underſtood to *confine* the Enquiry now before us.

And, in this View, the Delay of Succeſs to a Nation's *repeated Faſts* for a Bleſſing on its Arms may, I think, generally be aſcribed to ſome *Defect* in one or more of theſe Particulars: — the *Goodneſs* of the *Cauſe* wherein they are engaged: — the *Propriety* of the *Means* employ'd in the Proſecution of it: — the *Qualifications* and Circumſtances of *ſuch Faſts themſelves*: — or, the *Effects* theſe ought to have had in regard to a ſuitable *Reformation* of any former Miſconduct. — Of each of theſe briefly, and in the order above-mentioned.

"That there *may be* Occaſion given ſufficient to juſtify a Nation, upon Principles of *Reaſon,* in vindicating its Rights by the Uſe of Arms; and "that *Chriſtianity* does not deprive Nations *profeſſing its Truth* of thoſe Means of Self-Defence which Reaſon allows them; are Points which I ſhall here take for *granted*: Becauſe, tho' they have been, and ſtill continue to be, conteſted by ſome; yet have they often, and (I think) unanſwerably, been made good by others. But after all, whoever well conſiders, *What War is*, at the ſame Time that he judges it *may be* lawful, will allow, that there muſt always be ſome *good Cauſe* to make it *ſuch*. War is a direct Appeal to the Court of Heaven: And ſurely, Nothing leſs than a well-grounded Aſſurance, at leaſt a fair Preſumption, of the Juſtice of their Plea, can give any People reaſonable Hopes of a Determination in their Favour from that impartial Tribunal. And, as War is an Appeal of ſuch a Nature, that the Fortunes and Lives of Millions, nay their yet more durable Intereſts (the Value of which cannot be brought within any of our Computations) muſt often be very deeply concerned, not only in the *Iſſue*, but in the very *Proſecution* of it; the *Importance*, as well as the Clearneſs, of the Rights contended for, muſt alſo be a Circumſtance always demanding a ſerious Attention. — That the moſt ardent Prayers, the moſt ſolemn Faſts, can little avail a People unjuſtly or unneceſſarily *going forth to Battle*, I need ſcarce obſerve: Theſe can *never change* a bad Cauſe into a good one; or give to one People *any Right* to the Poſſeſſions or the Commerce of another. Nay rather, ſhould a Nation wrongfully, or even raſhly, engaging in War, apply for Succeſs to the ſupreme Arbiter of Conteſts of this Kind; ſuch a Proceeding muſt (according to all our Notions of Things) provoke His Reſentment inſtead of conciliating his Favour: It would be to requeſt His Patronage to Slaughter and Bloodſhed, to Injuſtice and Rapine. And, tho' Providence may, for wiſe Purpoſes, often permit Nations, invading *the Rights* of others, to triumph *for a Time* in the Poſſeſſion of *Spoils taken by Violence*: Yet, when any People find their Enterprizes defeated, and their Humiliations ineffectual; well may *theſe* appear among their Articles of Enquiry, "Whether the Failure of their Purpoſes has not been owing to *ſome Iniquity* in their *Cauſe*? And "Whether they have not been *affronting* GOD's Honour by imploring His *Bleſſing* upon it?

And the like may be obſerved in regard to the *Means* to be employ'd in the Proſecution of a juſt Cauſe. 'Tis true, *Human* Means ſhould in no Caſe be ſolely or chiefly rely'd on: and leaſt of all in this, where it ought to be ever remembered, that [a] *the Battle is not*

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[a] 2 Chron. XX. 15.

ours but God's. So far, however, is an Application of wrong Means, or even a Neglect in applying proper ones, from being on that account juſtifiable, that it cannot be excuſable. The great Governor of the Univerſe is *a* God *of Order, and not of Confuſion*; and accordingly makes (what we call) *ſecond Cauſes* uſually produce their Effects regularly and *uniformly*: Otherwiſe Experience and Obſervation could be of little Uſe, and Wiſdom and Folly would become almoſt the ſame Thing. And, tho' the Almighty reſerves to Himſelf a Power of controlling the Motions and Operations of His Creatures whenſoever and howſoever He pleaſes; and, in War particularly, takes frequent Occaſions to convince us, that [a] *there is no Reſtraint to Him to ſave by many or by few*: Yet the Ground for us to proceed upon, in our Deliberations and Actions, is not, what the Almighty *can* do, but what it is *reaſonable* for us to expect He *will* do; and reaſonable it cannot be for us to expect *extraordinary* Interpoſitions, where the *ordinary Means* which He has put in our Power *are neglected* or miſapply'd. And, if [b] *every Purpoſe*, in the common Affairs of Life, requires to be *eſtabliſh'd by Counſel*, more eſpecially ſhould a Nation *with good Advice make War*. The Truth is, where proper Meaſures are not concerted, much more where unlawful ones are made uſe of, the moſt formal Addreſſes to the Deity would, in Perſons conſcious of ſuch Miſmanagement, be rather Inſtances of Preſumption, than Expreſſions of Piety. And ſhould any Thing of this Kind *evidently appear* in the Caſe of a diſappointed People; tho', for Reaſons already ſuggeſted, they ought always to look higher for the *ſupreme Diſpoſer* of their Affairs, and nearer home for the *original Source* of any unpleaſing Circumſtances attending them; yet it would be natural for them alſo to aſcribe their Diſappointments to that Unſkilfulneſs or Unfaithfulneſs, as to the *immediate Inſtrument*, by which they would, *on this Suppoſition*, be ſo viſibly occaſioned.

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[a] 1 Sam. XIV. 6. [b] Prov. XX. 18.

But a farther Defect, more ſuitable to my preſent Purpoſe to conſider, may be in the *Qualifications* of a People's *Faſts* and Humiliations in *themſelves*. This is indeed the Defect principally inſiſted upon by the Prophet in [a] the Context; which I will not repeat at large, after it has been juſt read to you. From which Paſſage, compared with others on the ſame Subject, we may collect the three following *principal Requiſites* of a National Faſt, on Occaſion of War: — An *unfeigned* Humiliation both of Body and Mind; in Oppoſition to ſuch an Hypocritical Performance of this Duty, as allows of private Indulgences of our ſenſual Appetites (here called, *Finding Pleaſure)* or ſuch as is principally calculated to engage the Obſervation and [s] *Applauſe of Men:* — An humble Application for, and *ſincere Reliance* upon, the Divine Bleſſing on the Uſe of proper Means; in Oppoſition to a Self-ſufficient Confidence and arrogant *Glorying in our own Might*, Policy, or Alliances, &c: — And laſtly, an *humane Temper* of Mind toward All, but particularly a Readineſs to redreſs the aggrieved and relieve the diſtreſſed; in Oppoſition to *Strife and Debate* with Equals, Inſolence and Oppreſſion toward Inferiours, and eſpecially an unfeeling Hardneſs of Heart toward the indigent and afflicted. I need not enlarge upon theſe Particulars. If Self-Indulgence and Hypocriſy; if Preſumption and Confidence in our own Strength; if rigorous Exactions upon the defenceleſs, and Want of Bowels for the miſerable; can be more unſeaſonable at one Time than at another; *that*

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[a] Iſai. LVIII. the Leſſon for the Day.

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[s] Matt. VI. 16. &c.

Time muſt be, when we profeſs to humble ourſelves in Duſt and Aſhes, imploring Pardon for paſt Sins; and Protection againſt impending Dangers. — A Faſt, attended with all or any of the vitiating Circumſtances above-mentioned, can never be *the Faſt which GOD has choſen*; nor ſhould a People thus only *afflicting their Soul* be at a Loſs to anſwer, *Wherefore He taketh no Knowledge.*

Eſpecially if, in the laſt Place, their former Humiliations have *alſo failed* of producing a *proper Reformation* of paſt Tranſgreſſions. — "That Impiety and Iniquity, whether in ſingle Perſons or in Communities, is *that abominable Thing which* God *hateth*; and which, whilſt unreformed, He will by no means ſuffer to eſcape *finally* unpuniſhed: "that, tho' Perſonal Guilt need not, yet National Wickedneſs muſt, receive its Puniſhment in the *preſent* World: "that therefore National Reformation is neceſſary to avert National Judgments, and to engage the Favour of the Almighty, eſpecially *when the Hoſt goeth forth againſt their Enemies*: and "that *This* has appeared in the *General* Courſe of Providence thro' out all the Records of former Ages, with which we have any Acquaintance:" — *Theſe* are Particulars, which I muſt not here ſtay to illuſtrate. And ſurely, the moſt *ſolemn Addreſſes* to the Majeſty of Heaven can make no Difference *in Favour* of an *impenitent* People, but rather the contrary; it being a Truth moſt agreeable to the cleareſt of our natural Notions, that [a] God *heareth not Sinners*, nay that [b] *the Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to Him.* Indeed, to imagine, that a few Prayers, or even *Faſtings*, ſhould attone for a general Neglect and Violation of God's other righteous Laws, would be to aſcribe to *the Judge of all the Earth* ſuch a Degree of Unconcernedneſs for his own Honour and Authority, as we ſhould call by *any* Name rather than that of *Goodneſs* in a Man like ourſelves. However, God's People of old having been ſurpriſingly fond of this deluſive Perſuaſion, we have His expreſs Declarations, by their *Prophets and Righteous Men*, upon this very Point, *written for our Learning*. And well may Nations in general by theſe be *admoniſhed*, if at any Time the Bleſſings they have been earneſtly requeſting are [c] *turned away, and good Things withholden from them*, that ſuch Delays are to be charged, not to any Failure on God's Part, but to *Something amiſs* on their own: That *vain* will their moſt coſtly and painful Services always be, if not accompany'd with *inward* Piety and *uniform* Holineſs of Life: In ſhort, that for the Want of *Theſe*, the moſt punctual Compliance with *outward* and *occaſional* Obſervances (how commendable ſoever in itſelf) can by no means compenſate. Numerous are the Paſſages to this Purpoſe, that occur eſpecially in the *Prophetick* Writings; and a very remarkable one You will eaſily recollect from the [a] *Beginning* of the *Evangelical* Prophecy to which I have ſo often refer'd. But I may content myſelf with citing only that which follows; the rather, as it comes almoſt immediately after, and gives a diſtinct Anſwer to, the Queſtion in my *Text*. [b] *Behold the LORD's Hand is not ſhortened, that it cannot ſave; nor His Ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But Your Iniquities have ſeparated between You and Your GOD; and Your Sins have hid His Face from You, that He will not hear.* A Declaration ſo expreſs, as to want no Comment; but at the ſame Time of ſuch Moment, as cannot be conſidered with too much Attention, or with too much Impartiality apply'd, by Thoſe, who have *for ſome Years* been imploring the Divine Aid and Protection.

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[a] Joh. XI. 31. [b] Prov. XV. 8. [c] Jer. V. 25.

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[a] Iſai. I. 11—17. [b] Ibid. LIX. 1, 2.

II. How far *We of this Nation* are concern'd in *this* or *any* of the Caſes beforementioned; it may therefore now be ſeaſonable for Us, in the *Second* Place, to enquire.

And here (that I may *begin* with that which was *firſt* ſuggeſted) I truſt, we have nothing to reproach ourſelves with, in regard to the *Juſtice*, or even the *Neceſſity*, of the *Wars*, in which we are at preſent engaged. The *Former* was not declared by us, 'till loudly call'd for by the united Voice of the whole People; after long Forbearance, and numberleſs Injuries received in a *Part*, wherein theſe Kingdoms muſt always be very ſenſibly affected. And, as to the *Latter*, our Caſe (I hope) is equally clear: *This* has lately been *forced* upon us by our reſtleſs Neighbours; who, as if reſenting that we ſhou'd *pretend* to exceed them in Faithfulneſs to Engagements, which they entered into with equal Solemnity, and upon Terms *to them* far more advantageous; have preſumed to threaten, not our Commerce only, but our Laws and Liberties, our *Government* and our *Holy Religion*. If there *can be* a juſtifiable Occaſion for appealing to Heaven in the Uſe of Arms (as unqueſtionably there may) the neceſſary Defence of *all Theſe* muſt certainly be allowed to be *ſuch* an Occaſion. And if, in the Progreſs of a long and *complicated* War, any Doubt ſhould ariſe about *particular Incidents*; I ſee not what *Private* Perſons (unacquainted as they may well ſuppoſe themſelves to be with the *Whole* of ſuch Tranſactions) can think more ſuited to their Station, than to refer *Caſes* of this Kind to the Wiſdom of the *Authorized Guardians* of our Publick Intereſts; whoſe ſerious Attention they will always (no doubt) highly deſerve.

Which laſt Obſervation I would particularly apply to the *next* Article of Enquiry above hinted at, namely, the *Propriety of the Means* made Uſe of in the Proſecution of the War. —*Theſe* muſt, in the Nature of Things, be *previouſly ordered* by ſome, and *put in Execution* by others, whoſe *Province* it is to ſuperintend and conduct them. And, as to the Direction or Execution of them *when paſt*; I conceive, Perſons at a *Diſtance* from publick Tranſactions, and in *no Capacity called upon* to pronounce any Thing concerning them, may fairly excuſe themſelves from *paſſing Sentence*, where they may be ſo eaſily miſtaken. At leaſt, it would ill become *me* to detain You upon Enquiries of this Kind, on an Occaſion *ſacred* to quite other Purpoſes: Eſpecially ſince, *which way ſoever* we ſhould find Cauſe to determine, it wou'd remain *equally* neceſſary for us to go thro' thoſe other Heads of *Examination*, in which we are all of us far *more nearly* concerned. Only let me not leave this Article without briefly obſerving; that there is a *Deference to Authority*, which Reaſon and the very Nature of Society require: That Perſons engaged in arduous Employments are not on that Account the leſs entitled to the ſame *Candour*, which our Religion recommends to us all *in judging* of each other's Deſigns and Actions: And that, were the *Apoſtolical* Rule of [a] *Studying to be quiet, and to do their own Buſineſs*, more generally obſerved; perhaps *publick Order* would be no worſe preſerved; but certainly the *Minds* of *particular Perſons* would be leſs apt to [b] *diſquiet themſelves in vain*, leſs [c] *careful and troubled about many Things*, to the fatal Neglect of (what is at leaſt *comparatively* ſpeaking) *the one Thing needful*. — But to proceed.

Fain would I perſwade myſelf alſo, that we are competently clear with regard to the *Nature* and *Circumſtances* of our paſt and preſent

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[a] 1 Theſſ. IV. 11. [b] Pſal. XXXIX. 6. [c] Luk. X. 41, 42.

Faſtings: that the *inward Seriousneſs*, Devotion, and Self-Abaſement of our Humiliations have been in ſome Good Degree anſwerable to the *outward Decency* and Solemnity of them: that we have not been mocking God, by approaching His Throne with *Profeſſions* of *Confidence* in His gracious Aid, whilſt our chief *Truſt has been in Chariots and Horſes*, or in our *own Counſel and Strength for the War:* and laſtly, that, inſtead of Rancour and Proneneſs to Strife, we have brought with us to theſe Religious Exerciſes the truly *Chriſtian Graces* of mutual Love and Brotherly Kindneſs; *Hearts* open to the tender Impreſſions of Pity and Compaſſion, and *Hands* ſtretched forth to relieve the Diſtreſſes of our indigent Brethren. The *Report* to be made upon theſe Enquiries muſt indeed be left to every Man's own Conſcience. Only with regard to the *laſt:* tho' Inſtances there always have been, and too many there ſtill may be, of cruel Oppreſſion and [a] *Grinding the Faces of the Poor*; yet (I truſt) *Unmercifulneſs* is not a *National* Vice amongſt us. Bleſſed be God! a truly commendable Spirit of Generoſity and Munificence, of Readineſs and even *Forwardneſs* to ſupply the Wants, and to adminiſter Comfort to the Diſtreſſes, both of the Souls and Bodies of that Part of our Species which labours under them, has for ſome Time been exerting itſelf in the Promotion of many excellent Charities of various Kinds. And, had not our *Prayers been hindered* by any Thing of *another* Nature; we ſhould probably already have experienced the happy *Influence* of our many *charitable Foundations*; and that, under the Bleſſing of Providence, [a] *our Alms ſhut up in theſe Storehouſes* (as the Son of *Sirach* expreſſeth it) had *fought for us againſt our Enemies better than a mighty Shield and a ſtrong Spear*.

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[a] Iſai. III. 15.

Bnt, alas! there yet remains *another Head* of *National Self-Examination!* and unleſs we ſhall appear to have [b] *broke off our Sins by Righteouſneſs*, we muſt not wonder if they continue ſtill unexpiated by, that otherwiſe beſt of *our* Sacrifices, *ſhewing Mercy to the Poor*. Let us then, with all Impartiality, aſk ourſelves, or in Purſuance of the preſent Appointment *permit me* to aſk, *How far* our former Faſts have been attended by a *ſuitable Reformation* in the Inſtances at firſt complained of? and particularly, *What Improvement* we have made in the Practice of *Religious*, *Per-*

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[a] Eccluſ. XXIX. 12, 13. [b] Dan. IV. 27.

ſonal, and *Social* Duties, in the Courſe of theſe our repeated Humiliations?

To begin (where all our Views ſhould be principally directed) with what relates to *the Glory of GOD*. — Is the *Name* of God more reverently uſed in common Diſcourſe, or the Obligation of *Oaths* more inviolably obſerved, than formerly? Are *Perſons* and *Things*, that have been dedicated to His immediate Service, regarded more ſuitably to the Relation in which they ſtand? Is His *Worſhip* more regularly kept up in *Private Families*; or more univerſally and more ſeriouſly attended in the *Great Congregation*? Is that *ſmall* Portion of *Time* which He, to whom we owe the *whole* of it, was pleaſed from the Beginning to *conſecrate* to Religious Uſes, leſs commonly or leſs publickly *prophaned* by Worldly Buſineſs or Pleaſure? Are thoſe *Scriptures which were given by Inſpiration from Him*, and which contain an ineſtimable Treaſure of *Direction* and *Comfort* to every ſerious Mind, leſs expoſed to idle Cavil, to ſtupid Burleſque, to blaſphemous Drollery? Are Writings avowedly attacking their *Divine Authority*, and tending in their *direct* Conſequences to baniſh from the Minds of the People *all Religious* Sentiments, all notions not only of a Redeemer and Sanctifier, but of a Providence, a Judge, and an Avenger, leſs induſtriouſly propagated by ſome, or with more Zeal diſcountenanced by others? — If this ſhall appear to be the Caſe, we may humbly hope, that the Almighty will in his good Time, favourably [a] *hear from the Heavens our Prayer and our Supplication, and maintain our Cauſe.* But, ſhould the Reverſe of all this be rather found true, His Diſregard of our Faſts may *from hence* be but too eaſily accounted for. Vain and preſumptuous muſt our moſt devout Humiliations *on one Day in the Year* certainly appear, ſhould there be Cauſe to ſuſpect, that *GOD is ſcarcely in all our Thoughts,* to any good Purpoſe, for the Remainder of it. Communities are not leſs concerned than Individuals, in that awful Declaration—[b] *They that deſpiſe Me ſhall be lightly eſteemed.*

Again: An *unreflecting* Levity of Mind, a prevailing *Luxury* and Fondneſs for *ſenſual* Pleaſures, equally unſuitable to Men's Circumſtances and inconſiſtent with their Duty; were at firſt complained of as National Diſorders among us. And have *the People of this Land* in general ſince recovered their *once famed* Plainneſs, Seriouſneſs, and Regularity of

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[a] 2 Chr. VI. 35. [b] 1 Sam. II. 30.

Behaviour? Do we find Men of all Conditions grown more willing to *deny themſelves* the Uſe not only of ſuperfluous, but even *criminal Gratifications?* Has the Support of a conſuming War made any viſible Retrenchments from our former expenſive Elegance in *Diverſions*, as well as Dreſs and all the Articles of Living? Rather, do we not, in the Midſt of our Complaints of encreaſing Poverty, ſtill continue to *compaſs Sea and Land*; ranſacking all the Stores of Nature in order to furniſh out *freſh Materials* for Pleaſure, all the Inventions of Art in order to diſcover *new Kinds* of it? — The Anſwer to theſe Queſtions muſt be left to every one's Obſervation of what paſſes before him. But let us not flatter ourſelves, that to *afflict our Soul only for a Day, to bow down the Head as a Bulruſh, to ſpread Sackloth and Aſhes under us*; in ſhort, to impoſe upon ourſelves, for *a few Hours*, all the *outward Tokens*, or even all the *real Offices*, of Abſtinence and Mortification, without Moderation in our Enjoyments, and a due Government over our Appetites, *at other Times*; will be admitted as *a Faſt and an acceptable Day to the LORD*. Let us remember that tremendous Denunciation of the Prophet in a Free-thinking and Free-living

People, — [a] *In that Day did the LORD of Hoſts call to Weeping and to Mourning and to Baldneſs and to Girding with Sackcloth: And behold! Joy and Gladneſs, ſlaying Oxen and killing Sheep, eating Fleſh and drinking Wine, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we dye." And it was revealed in mine Ears by the LORD of Hoſts, ſaying, Surely this Iniquity ſhall not be purged away from you till ye dye, ſaith the LORD GOD of Hoſts!* But

Farther: With regard to the *Relative* Obligations ſubſiſting between the Members of the Community. Has *a Reverence for Government* as *the Ordinance of GOD*, and for *Governours* as *His Miniſters*, of late gained any Ground among the ſeveral ſubordinate Ranks of Men? Are the ſacred Tyes of the *Domeſtick Relation* more religiouſly comply'd with? Is *Juſtice* and *Fairneſs in Men's Dealings* with each other more ſtrictly obſerved? Is [b] *the Labourer* thought more *worthy of his Hire* by the Perſon employing him, or is *he* on his Part more *content with his Wages*? Are *Men in general* more eaſy under the Allotments of Providence, more induſtrious in their reſpective Callings, more punctual in [c] *ren-*

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[a] Iſai. XXII. 12, 13, 14. [b] Luk. X. 7. and III. 14.
[c] Rom. XIII. 7.

dering to all their Dues? And, in Conſequence, Do *the Great* and the Opulent find [a] *their Houſes more ſafe from Fear,* and their Perſons from Inſult and Outrage? Have we fewer [b] *Complainings in our Streets*; is [c] *Violence* more rarely *heard in our Land, or Waſting and Deſtruction within our Borders?* — I wiſh every one's Obſervation would enable him to give himſelf a pleaſing Account of theſe Matters. But if, on the other Hand, an *Impatience of Reſtraints* of any Kind, and a *Contempt of all Order* and Authority, be a notorious Part of the *Character* of the preſent Generation: if the moſt audacious Violations of all Laws, human as well as divine, are daily committed, and make ſome of the *principal Occurrences* of our Times: if Men of Rank and Fortune to their Sorrow find, that thoſe Perſons, whom *their* Practice has for ſome Time been teaching *not to fear GOD,* have at laſt, without any ſuch Inſtruction, learned *not to regard Man*—May not ſuch [d] *Overflowings of Ungodlineſs* juſtly *make us afraid?* Can we want a Reaſon, *wherefore we have faſted and GOD ſeeth not?* Is it poſſible even for Providence, without a *miraculous* Interpoſition, to ſave us? or, ſhould God be pleaſed to deliver us from our *foreign* Enemies, muſt He not work as *mighty* a Deliverance, to reſcue us *from ourſelves.*

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[a] Job XX. 9. [b] Pſal. CXLIV. 14. [c] Iſai. LX. 18. [d] Pſal. XVIII. 3.

It were but too eaſy to proceed in *aſking* (would to God it were equally agreeable to *anſwer!*) ſuch Queſtions as theſe, with regard to the *viſible* State of Religion and Morals among us. And yet there remains ſtill farther very important Matter for Enquiry; I mean, thoſe *Perſonal* Sins, thoſe [a] *Plagues of our own Hearts,* which each of us is particularly called upon to ſearch into and deplore; eſpecially when, on ſuch Occaſions as this, we *ſpread forth our Hands in the Houſe of GOD. Theſe,* when fairly brought to Account, and added to our many *National* Tranſgreſſions, may too juſtly fill us with *Shame and Confuſion of Face:* and make us, inſtead of expoſtulating with God for the little Notice He has taken of our former Humiliations, cry out in the penſive Strains of the *lamenting* Prophet, [b] *It is of the LORD's Mercies that we are not conſumed, becauſe His Compaſſions fail not!*

Happy for us, that His *Compaſſions do not fail!* Let us then, upon the Encouragement ariſing from this Reflection, go on to enquire,

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[a] 8 Kin. VIII. 38. [b] Lam. III. 22.

III. *Thirdly*, What remains *to be done on our Part*, in order more ſucceſsfully to recommend ourſelves to the Divine Favour and Bleſſing for the Future?

And, after what has been ſaid, it may be proper to obſerve, in the *Firſt* Place, that the *ſeeming Unſucceſsfulneſs* of our former Humiliations muſt by no means diſcourage us from *continuing* the ſame earneſt Applications to the *GOD of Heaven*; which, tho' *of themſelves inſufficient*, will however always be *neceſſary*, to engage His Protection and Favour.

As there is no Perfection, in the Exerciſe and Diſplay of which GOD has thought fit to expreſs a greater *Delight*, than that of Mercy and *Loving Kindneſs*; ſo there is ſcarce any Provocation, of which He has in ſtronger Terms expreſſed His Reſentment, than that of a *deſponding* or *prophane* Diſtruſt of this His glorious Attribute. Hear the remarkable Words of the Prophet *Jeremiah*; [a] *Aſk ye now among the Heathen, who hath heard ſuch Things? the Virgin of* Iſrael *hath done a very horrible Thing*. But what could give Occaſion to a Charge ſo unuſually aggravated? Why, it ſeems, when God had ſaid, *Behold I frame Evil againſt you, and deviſe a Device againſt you: return ye now every one from his evil Way, and make your Ways and your Doings good:* the perverſe Uſe they made of ſo gracious a Warning was this: *They ſaid, There is no Hope: but we will walk after our own Devices, and we will every one do the Imagination of his evil Heart.* Far be it from us, to draw any ſuch abominable Inference from God's Threatenings, or from the *little Knowledge* He may ſeem to have taken of our former Addreſſes to Him. Let us remember His ſevere Expoſtulation with His own People by the Prophet *Malachi*; [a] *Your Words have been ſtout againſt me, ſaith the LORD of Hoſts.* But, *what* had they *ſpoken ſo much againſt* Him? The Anſwer we have in the next Verſe; They had *ſaid, it is vain to ſerve GOD; and what Profit is it that we have kept his Ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of Hoſts?* —We ſee, the Almighty expects (as moſt juſtly He may) that Nations ſhould *wait his Time* for the Grant of their Petitions; and is not leſs diſpleaſed with their Diſtruſt of His Goodneſs and Power, than with their Confidence in their own.

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[a] Jer. XVIII. 11, 12, 13.

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[a] Mal. III. 13, 14.

Our Bleſſed Lord has taught *us Chriſtians*, both from his own Practice and by His Inſtructions, to hope for thoſe gracious Anſwers to our *re-iterated Requeſts*, which are not granted to our *firſt Addreſſes* for them. His Behaviour towards [a] *the Woman of Canaan* is remarkable to this Purpoſe. For the Tryal of her Faith, and Commendation of it to his Followers, even the merciful Jesus could put on the Appearance of Deafneſs to her Entreaties, and for ſome Time hold out againſt her piercing Cries for *Mercy to her Daughter*. But when ſhe, not ſatisfy'd firſt with his ſeemingly diſdainful Silence, and then with his cold Replies and forbidding Evaſions, again and again *renews* her Interceſſions; at length, as if *overcome* by her Perſeverance, He cries out, *O Woman, great is thy Faith! Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* After this, I need hardly illuſtrate the ſame Point from [b] *the Parable of the Friend importuned to lend three Loaves*, or that of *the* [c] *unjuſt Judge*; the *former* of which He directly applies to encourage *repeated Aſking after re-*

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[a] Matt. XV. 12—28. [b] Luc. XI. 5—14. [c] Luke XVIII. 1, &c.

peated Refuſals; and introduces the latter *to this very End, that Men ought always to pray and not to faint.*

Now what are we to collect from all this? Certainly not that a Being of infinite Perfection has *Occaſion* to be *reminded* of our Wants, or *takes Delight* in keeping us in *Suſpence* about the Supply of them, meerly for the Sake of doing ſo; leaſt of all, that he is capable of being *wearied into* Compaſſion by our Importunity and *much Speaking*. No. But God hath wiſe and gracious Ends to ſerve by this Method of Proceeding: perhaps to abate the Pride and mortify the Self-ſufficiency of vain Men; perhaps to exerciſe their Faith and Truſt in His Goodneſs, and to cheriſh in them a juſt Senſe of their entire Dependence on his Providence; perhaps to render His Bleſſings, when He ſhall at length think fit to grant them, more juſtly valued, more thankfully received, and more diſcreetly enjoy'd, by them.—And, to bring theſe Reflections *nearer to ourſelves*: Probably at our Entrance upon the War, our Hearts were not ſufficiently humbled into a due Senſe of our own Sinfulneſs and Unworthineſs; or of our Weakneſs in ourſelves, and abſolute Want of a ſuperior Aid: And, had our firſt Humiliations been *more viſibly* regarded by God, and our firſt Addreſſes to Him anſwered by an *immediate* Grant of Victory and Peace; we might have been but too forward (as I fear we were in ſome ſmaller Inſtances) to grow *elated* with Succeſſes ſo eaſily obtained, and to aſcribe them *wholly* to our own Bravery, Wiſdom, or Power. But, if we have ſince *learned Obedience, by the Things we have ſuffered* or without the Divine Help ſoon may ſuffer: if this preſent Humiliation has been performed by us with a ſuitable Devotion and Fervency; with a due Degree of Lowlineſs of Mind, and Dependence upon God; with undiſſembled Love to each other, and charitable Relief to our diſtreſſed Brethren: Who can tell, whether God may not have been [a] *waiting that He might be Gracious?* Whether He may not, even now, be giving Directions to the Miniſters of his Pleaſure, [b] *to turn our Heavineſs into Joy, to put off our Sackcloth and gird us with Gladneſs?*

However, to render our Hopes of this Kind in any Degree reaſonable, our Faſtings muſt be accompanied by a *ſincere Abhorrence* of paſt *Tranſgreſſions*, and ſucceeded by an *en-*

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[a] Iſai. XXX. 18. [b] Pſal. XXX. 11.

tire Turning away from them for the Future. Be *this* then our *Next* Care: Becauſe [a] *without this, our Oblations will be vain,* and *our Incenſe an Abomination*; nay our *Calling of Aſſemblies* will itſelf be *Iniquity, even this Solemn Meeting.*

What thoſe Provocations may be, which we of this Land are particularly called upon to lament and forſake, I ſhall not attempt farther to ſpecify. But it concerns us all to remember, that *National Reformation muſt firſt begin with Perſonal Amendment.* Let none of us then ſo mourn for the many crying Sins of *the Nation*, as to *forget* how much may have been contributed to the general Load by the Guilt of *his own.* Let our Zeal *firſt* exert itſelf in an impartial Scrutiny *here.* And, when by an unfeigned Sorrow, and humble Applications to the God of Mercy, we have ſet all right *within us*; it will then highly become us to look abroad; and each of us, in proportion to the Demands of his Station and the Extent of his Influence, to aſſiſt in promoting the Amendment of thoſe about him.—From *Perſons in Authority* much may be hoped for, if they [b] *bear not the Sword in vain*; if they employ the Power wherewith they are entruſted, [a] *for the Puniſhment of Evil-Doers* as well as *for the Praiſe of them that do well.*—Much will likewiſe be expected from *Miniſters of the Goſpel,* eſpecially with regard to the Souls committed to their Charge; to whom it is incumbent on them, as the [b] *appointed Watchmen, to give Warning* on every juſt Apprehenſion of Danger. — *Moſt of us* may do more than can perhaps eaſily be eſtimated, by Example, by Advice, by Exhortation, by Admonition, and (on Occaſions requiring it) by friendly Reproof.—Nor let the *Younger Part* of my preſent Hearers think themſelves unconcerned in this important Work. " To *You much is given:* Whilſt many, of the ſame *Nature,* and at the ſame *Seaſon of Life,* with Your's are employed in laborious and *ſervile* Offices, probably for *Your ſakes*; whilſt many others are almoſt wholly left to the Conduct of (thoſe worſt of Guides) their own *Youthful Luſts*; Ye are not only bleſſed with Leiſure and Opportunities for *learning the Way of Your Duty more perfectly,* but may be mightily aſſiſted by Your very Situation, in contracting early Habits of Self-Government, of Decency and Exemplarineſs in Behaviour: *Habits,* which if carried abroad with You into the World (bad as it is) may yet enable You to do no inconſiderable Service to the Cauſe of Reformation. And need I obſerve to You, how reaſonably Your *leſs happy* Countrymen may expect from *You*, that Ye ſhould *communicate* to them in *this* Way (the only Way in which they *can* partake of it) the invaluable Benefit of a regular Education; by [a] *ſhewing Yourſelves* unto them, *in all Things, Patterns of Good Works?*"

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[a] Iſai. I. 13. [b] Rom. XIII 4.

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[a] 1 Pet. II. 14.

[b] Ezek. XXXIII. 7, &c.

In ſhort: Something we may, *every one of us*, do towards the general Good, by reforming ourſelves; by a faithful Diſcharge of our reſpective Duties; but eſpecially, by our Prayers to Almighty God. For we may with ſome Comfort remember, that at the *Patriarch*'s Interceſſion, even *Sodom* [b] *had been ſpared*, could only *Ten Righteous Perſons have been found there*. Let none of us then be diſheartened. Vice and Wickedneſs are indeed forward and daring; and *particular* Inſtances of them make much Noiſe in the World: And it muſt be confeſſed to be a Circumſtance not a little diſcouraging to the Friends of Virtue, that too many, whom we would *charitably* believe Well-wiſhers to the ſame good Cauſe, do yet greatly obſtruct it; not only by a *Phariſaical Oſtentation* of their own ſuperior Holineſs; but by ſpreading among the People *perplexing Notions* and *dangerous Explications* of ſome very important Points; and by *railing Accuſations* againſt thoſe, whoſe *Province* and *Deſire* it is to inſtruct them with *Words of Truth and Soberneſs.* But ſtill, We humbly hope, *GOD reſerves to himſelf many Thouſands* equally free from Licentiouſneſs on one hand, and Enthuſiaſm on the other; And by His Bleſſing, under all Diſadvantages, the [a] *Light* of an undiſſembled Worth, *ſhining before Men,* with Candour and at the ſame Time with Steadineſs, in the Practice of *good Works,* may engage yet More, by a juſt Imitation, *to glorify our Father which is in Heaven.*

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[a] Tit. II. 7. [b] Gen. XVIII. 32.

Vain, however, will all our Attempts towards *National Reformation* be, unleſs the *Foundation* be laid in *National Piety*; in the powerful Principles of Conſcience, the prevailing Motives of Religion. Let it then be our *Farther* Care, firſt to cheriſh within ourſelves, and then as we have Opportunity to promote in others, that [b] *Fear of the LORD,*

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[a] Matt. V. 16. [b] Pſal. CXI. 10.

which is, in regard to Societies as well as Individuals, *the Beginning of Wiſdom.*

Religious Principles will ever be the beſt Supports of any Community, either in Peace or War. They engage *all Orders* of Men in the Performance of thoſe Offices, by which its *Proſperity muſt be upheld:* They inſpire its *Governours,* both ſupreme and ſubordinate, with Fidelity to their great Truſt; its *Armies* with Courage in the Day of Battle; its *People* with Loyalty and Chearfulneſs in diſcharging the Duties of their reſpective Stations: Above all, they moſt powerfully ſolicite the Protection and Favour of Almighty GOD: and, that once ſecured, [a] *tho' an Hoſt of Men be laid againſt us, yet* need *not* our *Heart be afraid; and tho' there riſe up War againſt us, yet* may we *put our Truſt in Him.*

Should I, in View of ſome [*] late *alarming* Circumſtances, go on to recommend an Affection for *any particular Eſtabliſhment* of Religion; ſuch an Expedient for keeping out *Popery* might perhaps by Some be thought a *prepoſterous* one: Thoſe I mean, who imagine, or pretend to imagine, that whereſoever Religious Eſtabliſhments are ſupported, *the Work of Popery*, or ſomething at leaſt *as bad* as Popery, is effectually carried on; and who ſeem to think, there can be no *conſiſtent Proteſtantiſm*, unleſs all Tenets in Religion be *equally* allowed and (if that be indeed *practicable*) *equally* encouraged; with this *only* Reſerve, that they be *not Popiſh* ones. I am, notwithſtanding, perſuaded, that the only effectual *Human* Means for ſupporting the Reformed Religion in this Kingdom, muſt be an *Eſtabliſhment* of ſome *determinate Scheme* of it, with ſome Degree of Zeal for it throughout the ſeveral Orders of Men. And (all unſeaſonable Contention apart) I truſt, we ſhall adhere to *that* we are in Poſſeſſion of, 'till a *better* ſhall be propoſed; or one, which has (under GOD) been *more inſtrumental in ſaving us* from ſome former Attempts of the ſame Enemy.

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[a] Pſalm XXVII. 3.

[*] The *Danger* here meant was *That* of an *Invaſion,* from the Enemies of our *Religion* and *Government,* which had alarmed us in the Beginning of the Year 1744. But the following Reflections appeared to have been the more ſeaſonable, when a *Second Attempt* from the ſame Quarter, in Conjunction with a *Rebellion,* more *nearly* threatened us, in leſs than a Year after *This* was preached and publiſhed.

It has, we know, been the Policy of ſome among us, after endeavouring to diſcharge the *Civil Magiſtrate* from *all Care* of Religion, to bring the *People* into a State of as much *Indifference* as poſſible about any *particular Forms* of it: in order (as we may ſuppoſe) to reſcue them from an Influence, which theſe Perſons ſeem never to talk or think of with any Patience. One would imagine, however, that our *late Fears* might (if Nothing elſe ſhould) diſpoſe Men to conſider, Whether this Matter has not *already* been carried as far as will well conſiſt with the *Publick Safety?* Had our *Fathers*, on an ever-memorable Occaſion juſt hinted at, been as little concerned about *Modes of Faith*, Forms of Polity, or Rites of Worſhip, as Some have of late Years been perſwading *Us* to be; I think, it cannot be hard to determine, in what Condition not only our *Religious* but our *Civil Liberties* had been long before this Time. And, ſhould God, for our Sins, ſuffer the Danger, with which we were lately threatened, to approach *ſtill nearer* to us; the Enemies of our *Country* could ſcarce hope to find an *impoveriſhed* People (perhaps but too eaſily *taught* to call the *Incumbrances*, they at any Time feel, by the Name of *Grievances*) in a Temper better ſuited to *their* pernicious Purpoſes, than *that* of *Lukewarmneſs* towards the Religion they now profeſs; or in a Situation more promiſing, than *that* of an entire *Detachment* from any *Influence*, which its appointed Teachers could have over them.

The Truth is, ſhould Men once take up the Perſuaſion, that not only the Inſtructors, but the Inſtitutions, in *all Religions are the ſame*; they could have little Scruple, upon a ſuitable Temptation offered, againſt becoming Proſelytes to *any*: Nor might thoſe, who ſhould be *really willing*, have it in their *Power*, to make the *Romiſh Religion* an *Exception* in this Caſe. If its *Abſurdities* and *Idolatries* muſt ſhock the Rational and Thoughtful Part of the Nation; and if the Humane and Good-natured muſt be ſtartled (as well they may) at the great *Barbarities* formerly exerciſed, and the yet greater attempted, by its Profeſſors in theſe Kingdoms: Yet let it be remembered, that it has much *Pomp* and *Pageantry* in its Worſhip to attract the Lover of State and Magnificence; It *pretends* to have *Infallible* Guidance for the Doubtful, and ſecure *Repoſe* for the Unſettled; It offers *Indulgences* to the Libertine, and deals out *Pardons* to the Debauched, on very eaſy Terms: And to how conſiderable a Part of our People, when once ſet looſe from the Principles in which they have been educated, It might ſoon addreſs itſelf, under one or other of theſe

Characters, in a Conjuncture of *real Danger*; I think, every *Lover of his Country* (could we urge no *higher* Motive) might do well to conſider.

Whereas, on the other Hand, whilſt the Body of the Nation *generally* retain a Zeal for the *Honour* of God, and for His *pure Religion eſtabliſhed* among us; their Affection for a *Prince*, who has hitherto preſerved, and has often declared His unalterable Reſolution to preſerve, this *great Bleſſing* to them, will not (I truſt) eaſily be ſhaken: And *We* may go on with Chearfulneſs and Succeſs to [a] *put them in Mind*, upon every proper Occaſion, *to be ſubject to Principalities and Powers, and to obey Magiſtrates.* Indeed, Men who [b] *fear the LORD* can never want an Argument for *reverencing the King*, ſcarce ever an Objection againſt *meddling with thoſe that are given to Change*. Difference of Sentiments about Publick Affairs, or perhaps ſome Degree of Jealouſy againſt Encroachments upon Liberty, ſeems to be the Natural Reſult of National Freedom: And even Oppoſition to Proceedings thought irregular and dangerous, when exerted by *proper Perſons*, and in *Methods warranted* by the Laws of God and Man, may ſometimes, under the Direction of Providence, be of conſiderable Uſe in preſerving it. But ſtill; every *truly conſcientious* Man will, *at leaſt*, inſiſt on having ſome *very important Queſtions* (which I need not here ſuggeſt) fully reſolved, before He will allow himſelf to enter into Schemes of *Subverſion* againſt the Government that *protects* him, and to which he has *bound himſelf* by the moſt *awful Engagements*. And, in particular, a *Popiſh Prince* can never be a *welcome Viſitant* to a People well-acquainted with the Principles, and well-affected to the Conſtitution, of the *Church of England*.

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[a] Tit. III. 1.   [b] Prov. XXIV. 21.

Upon the Whole: If [a] *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation*; if *Sin be the Reproach*, and muſt, when *perſiſted* in, be the Ruin, *of any People*: 'tis as certain, that *National Piety* will ever be neceſſary to ſecure a due Cultivation of the one, or a timely Reformation from the other. But in vain ſhall we hope to preſerve *National Piety* without a *National Church*; or to ſupport either of them, *humanly* ſpeaking, without a *National Eſtabliſhment*. And, as long as the *Reformed Religion*, and every Bleſſing *connected* with it, ſhall be thought worthy of our Concern; ſo long it will be our Wiſdom to [a] *hold faſt the form of ſound Words* as we have been taught; and to [b] *worſhip the LORD*, as we now enjoy the happy Opportunity of worſhipping Him, *in the Beauty of Holineſs.*

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[a] Prov. XIV. 34.

But to return and conclude.—May we all, with that Serioufneſs, which the Occaſion calls for, [c] *ſearch and try our Ways, and turn to the LORD!* May every one of us, before we depart from this devout Exerciſe, reſolve to [d] *caſt away all his Tranſgreſſions whereby he has tranſgreſſed*; and, in proportion to his Influence and Opportunities to help forward the Reformation of others! And, as the moſt effectual Engagement to this great Work, may we (according to *our Prophet*'s emphatical Advice in a like Exigency) [e] *ſanctify the LORD of Hoſts Himſelf, and let Him be our Fear, and let Him be our Dread!*— So ſhall the *Fear of GOD* baniſh from our Breaſts all vain, ſuperſtitious, enſnaring, or tormenting Fears: We ſhall take the beſt Method *in our Power* for averting His Judgments from our Country; and for recommending to His Bleſſing our Counſels and Negotiations, or (ſhould Need ſtill be) our Fleets and Armies. But, however Providence may think fit to diſpoſe of the Affairs of this World; we ſhall, in all Events, ſecure to ourſelves [a] *that Loving-Kindneſs which is better than Life itſelf.* And then—tho' we ſhould ſtill [b] *hear of Wars and Rumours of Wars, we* ſhall the leſs need to *be terrified: In our Patience* we may *poſſeſs our Souls:* Humbly relying on His gracious Promiſe, that when, [c] *YET ONCE MORE,* GOD ſhall *ſhake not this Earth only but alſo Heaven;* when the Commotions of States and Kingdoms ſhall all be ſwallowed up in one great Convulſion of an expiring World; *We ſhall receive a Kingdom which cannot be moved,* if we be found, by the Aſſiſtance of His *Grace, to have ſerved Him acceptably, with Reverence and Godly Fear.*

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[a] 2 Tim. I. 3. [b] Pſal. XCVI. 9. [c] Lam. III. 46.
[d] Ezek. XVIII. 31. [e] Iſai. VIII. 13.

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[a] Pſal. LXIII. 3. [b] Luk. XXI. 9, 19. [c] Heb. XII. 26, 28.

A
SERMON
Preached before the
MAYOR AND CORPORATION,
AT
St. *Martin*'s in *OXFORD*,
On *Thurſday*, *October 9th*. 1746.

Being the Day appointed to be kept as a *General Thankſgiving* for the Suppreſſion of the late *Rebellion*.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Mayor, Bayliffs, and Commonalty of the CITY.

The THIRD EDITION.

Psalm CVII. 1, 2.

O give Thanks unto the LORD, *for* He is *Good*; *For His Mercy* endureth *for Ever.*

Let the Redeemed of the LORD *ſay* ſo; *Whom He hath redeemed from the Hand of the Enemy.*

THE *Goodneſs* of Almighty GOD is that Attribute, on the Contemplation whereof, ſo long as we actually feel how much we ſtand in need of it, our Thoughts *delight to dwell.* To *This* we naturally have Recourſe under the Apprehenſion of Danger, or the Preſſure of Affliction. And thus far all is right. But the Misfortune is, that *Deliverances vouchſafed* ſeldom leave Impreſſions in any Degree proportioned to the Ardency with which they were *implored.* The ſame Mouths, which in Time of Diſtreſs could *cry mightily unto GOD*, are too often obſerved, upon Men's Enlargement from their Straits, to become unaccountably ſilent. They who, perhaps, have but juſt been experiencing the *Goodneſs of the LORD*, ſhall want to be put in Mind to *give Thanks unto Him* for it: Even *the Redeemed of the LORD* muſt be called upon to *ſay*, *that His Mercy endureth for Ever*.

Upon a Call of this Kind from our Superiors, We have now been offering up our Acknowledgments to Almighty GOD, for a Deliverance *ſeaſonably* and, if we will but do *our Part* in improving it, *happily* granted to This Church and Nation. And, certainly, if ever any People had a *juſt* Call to acknowledge and improve a Diſpenſation of Providence, ſuch an one *We* of this Nation now have. *Many a Time had* the ſame *Right-Hand*, which at the Reformation *made Room for* His choice *Vine*, the Church eſtabliſhed in this Kingdom, graciouſly interpoſed in the Defence of it; not only ſometimes preventing its Exciſion, when *That* ſeemed unavoidable; but at other Times even reſtoring it to Life and Vigour, when it had been actually *cut down*, and was apprehended to be irrecoverably *dried up and withered*. And, if the proper Uſes have not always been made of ſuch Mercies in Times paſt; if we may too juſtly apprehend, that our late Dangers were occaſioned by the Unſucceſsfulneſs of former Warnings: Be it our Care, as it is certainly our great Concern, *in This our Day*, to make more ſuitable Returns for this Inſtance of GOD's Forbearance and Long-ſuffering to us. [a] *The Lord of the Vineyard*, notwithſtanding any former Diſappointments of his *juſt* Expectations from His *Fig-Tree* hath *let it alone this Year alſo: If it bear Fruit, well*; *if not*, we muſt not preſume upon its being *for ever* ſuffered to *cumber the Ground*. He that hath, for a Time and in Appearance, *caſt off His* own choſen *People*; He that hath long ſince *removed his Candleſtick* from the once enlightened Churches of *Aſia*; may well be ſuppoſed ready, ſhould we *continue* to give Him the like Provocation, to *take away* His Goſpel from *us* alſo, and *give it to a Nation bringing forth the Fruits thereof*.

Far be it from me, however, to forebode Evil to my Country, eſpecially on This auſpicious Day. My Deſire is to contribute my Endeavours towards *Lengthening its Tranquillity*. And that, in Purſuance of the preſent

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[a] Luke XIII. 7—9.

Appointment, I may at once be an *Helper of Your Joy*, a Furtherer of Your Gratitude, and a Promoter of Your trueſt Intereſt; I have choſen to addreſs You in the Words of my Text, "*O give Thanks unto the LORD, for He is Good; For His Mercy endureth for Ever: Let the Redeemed of the LORD ſay ſo; whom He hath redeemed from the Hand of the Enemy.*"

That beautiful Pſalm, to which theſe Words are the Introduction, contains great Variety of Matter for Praiſe and Thankſgiving to Almighty GOD, conſidered as a *Deliverer* in *Times of Trouble*: I might add, that ſcarce is an Article of Diſtreſs therein ſpecified, to which ſome Reſemblance may not be obſerved in what the People of this Nation *lately* either felt or feared. On what Occaſion this ſacred Hymn was firſt compoſed, or to what Purpoſes it might afterwards be applied, does not certainly appear. That Part of it which immediately follows my Text, beſides ſome Alluſions in other Paſſages, ſeems moſt fitly to repreſent the Caſe of a People *brought back* to their own Land, after a State of Separation from it, and *Diſperſion* over the ſeveral Quarters of the Earth. A Caſe, however, to which we need not *confine* the Words before us, nor the Duty therein recommended. If *Reſtoration* from a Captivity *already felt* calls for devout Joy and religious Exultation; ſurely the *Preſervation* of thoſe Comforts, which could otherwiſe at beſt have been *only regained*, may well inſpire *the Redeemed of the* LORD with like Sentiments of Gratitude. The *Recovery* of any Good is not, in itſelf, a *more real* Bleſſing than the *continued Poſſeſſion* of it. Nor can it be unſuitable to the *Pſalmiſt*'s Deſign, to exhort *Men* to *praiſe the* LORD *for his Goodneſs*, when He vouchſafes to *prevent* their Falling into *the Hand of an Enemy*, who might ſoon have diſpoſſeſſed them of their *Native Country*; or rather, whoſe Succeſſes muſt probably have ended in ſo entire a Deſtruction of every thing valuable *in* it, as to render a *voluntary Exile* the moſt deſireable Option left to all Good Men; in order to *ſeek* in ſome *ſtrange Land*, what could no longer be enjoyed in *their own*.

In my farther Application of the Words to the Buſineſs of this Day, I ſhall take Occaſion, as fully as the Time will allow, to conſider and illuſtrate the following Particulars:

I. *Firſt*, The *general Ground* on which the Duty of Thankſgiving for National Bleſſings, eſpecially for Deliverances *from the Hand of the Enemy*, is founded.

II. *Secondly*, The *particular Reaſonableneſs* of the Duty on this Occaſion; with a View to the late Situation and Circumſtances of our Church and Nation. And,

III. *Thirdly*, The *proper Manner* of expreſſing our Gratitude for ſuch a Deliverance; And the Influence it ought to have on our Conduct for the future.

I. As to the *Firſt*: The Duty of *Thankſgiving* for National Deliverances is, *in general* manifeſtly founded on theſe Two plain Suppoſitions:—"That Benefits conferred call for ſuitable Acknowledgments to be paid to the Benefactor by the Receiver:" And —"That the ſupreme Benefactor, to whom Nations, as well as ſingle Perſons, ſtand indebted for the Benefits conferred on them, and the Deliverances vouchſafed to them, is Almighty GOD." Suppoſitions ſo agreeable to our Natural Notions, ſo generally allowed by the ſober Part of Mankind, that they can need *but little*, will hardly admit of *any*, Illuſtration.

The Connection between *Favours conferred* on one Part and *Gratitude due* on the other, is ſo *immediately* viſible, that it is ſcarce poſſible by the Interpoſition of any other Conſideration to render it more evident than it is *by itſelf*. If any Perſon can be *ſuppoſed* inſenſible of it, after having ever done the loweſt Office of Kindneſs to another; We can only help his Apprehenſion by referring him to his *own Feeling* on ſuch an Occaſion; bidding him aſk his own Heart, "What *His* Expectations were from the Perſon he aſſiſted and (as we not more uſually than properly ſay) *obliged*."

And, "that God is the Great Benefactor, to whom all our Acknowledgments are *ultimately* due," is a Suppoſition equally certain with the former; tho' more liable to be perplexed by *the Diſputer*, more apt to be overlooked by the Politician, *of this World*. The great Governour of the Univerſe ſo generally acts by the Intervention of *ſubordinate Cauſes*; ſo uſually brings about His own Purpoſes without controlling the Powers which He originally gave them, or altering the Tendencies which He at firſt impreſſed upon them; that we cannot ordinarily diſtinguiſh with Exactneſs between the Effects of His *general Concurrence* and of His *ſpecial Direction.* But then, neither is it at all *neceſſary* that we ſhould thus diſtinguiſh. Notwithſtanding our Inability to explain the Nature of the Divine Superintendence, or to point out the Inſtances of His Interpoſition; devout Applications for the Bleſſings we want, and grateful Acknowledgments for Thoſe we have received, will ſtill be *our reaſonable Service:* ſo long as we are aſſured, that all Events are in HIS Hand, who *worketh all Things after the Counſel of His own Will.*

Whatever Efficiency the Author of Nature may have given to any Part of His own Workmanſhip; neither *Scripture* nor *ſound Philoſophy* will permit us to ſuppoſe, that He has put the ſupreme Management of the Whole out of His own Power. No. He who firſt *formed,* muſt ſtill continue to *uphold,* this great Machine of the Univerſe: The minuteſt Movement in it is continually ſubject to His Direction; and all its Parts inceſſantly *declare His Glory,* and *fulfil His Word.* And as to the *Moral* World: He, who is the *GOD of the Spirits of all Fleſh; in whom* they *live and move, and have* their *Being;* muſt be perfectly acquainted with their ſeveral Powers, and intimately preſent with all their Operations. [a] *In His Hand are the Hearts* of Men *as the Rivers of Water; and He turneth them whitherſoever He will.* Whether by direct internal Applications to them, or by diſpoſing outward Circumſtances for them, or by numberleſs other Methods unſearchable by us, He moſt eaſily can, and (we have Reaſon to think) continually doth, *influence* their Counſels, where He doth not *irreſiſtibly force* their Wills: nay He can even *work* their jarring Humours, their interfering Deſigns, into a *Subſerviency* to the great and good Purpoſes of His Providence. [b] *The LORD is King, be the People never ſo impatient.* He that [c] *ſtilleth the Raging of the Sea, and the Noiſe of its Waves*, can with the ſame Eaſe reſtrain *the Madneſs of the People*, and even ſo order Matters, that *the Fierceneſs of Man ſhall turn to his Praiſe.*

All Events, then, not excepting Thoſe which ſeem to happen moſt agreeably to (what we call) the *Natural Courſe* of Things, or to depend moſt on the *free Determinations* of Human Choice, are in the laſt Reſult to be aſcribed to the *Direction*, or at leaſt the

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[a] Prov. XXI. 1. [b] Pſal. XCIX. 1. [c] Ibid. LXV. 7.

Permiſſion, of Almighty God. And if ſo, more eſpecially applicable muſt this be to Thoſe Events, on which the Fates of whole Kingdoms depend. If *not a Sparrow falleth to the Ground without our Father*; if thoſe of His Creatures, which to us ſeem moſt inconſiderable, be yet by no means ſo inconſiderable as to eſcape His Notice or to be left out of His Protection; His condeſcending Care, we may be ſure, intereſts itſelf with *at leaſt equal* Regard in Thoſe Tranſactions, by the Iſſue whereof all that is valuable to large Societies of Men may be finally decided; ſuch as the Liberties and Lives of Millions, and (what is of ſtill more extenſive Importance) the Continuance of *true Religion* to whole Countries or its Removal from them. This is, indeed, an awful Subject; and, from the Narrowneſs of our Views of Things, we muſt often be at a Loſs to account for particular Appearances relating to it. But we have Reaſon to ſuppoſe, that States and Kingdoms are the great Scenes, on which *the LORD of the whole Earth* moſt uſually diſplays the *Strength of His Arm*, and the Juſtice of his Adminiſtration.

Accordingly, numberleſs are the Inſtances, of very ſurprizing Turns in the Affairs of

Kingdoms, particularly *in the Day of Battle.* Here *the LORD of Hoſts* ſeems more eſpecially willing to convince Mankind, that *there is no Reſtraint with Him to ſave by many or by few:* Not intending thereby to diſcourage the Uſe of the fitteſt Human Means of Defence; (*Theſe* not only may, but ordinarily muſt, be both carefully provided and ſkilfully applied;) but to teach us the Folly of ſolely relying on ſuch Means beforehand, and the Impiety of afterwards wholly aſcribing our Deliverances to them. [a] *The Horſe is prepared for the Day of Battle; but* ſtill it muſt be acknowledged, that *Safety is of the LORD.* Activity and Vigilance are certainly commendable; but, [b] *except the LORD keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain.* Egypt may be *ſent to for Chariots and for Horſemen*; but, whilſt Heaven withholds it Alliance, [c] *the Strength of* Pharaoh *ſhall be your Shame, and the Truſt in the Shadow of* Egypt *your Confuſion:* And the moſt favourable Account to be given of ſuch Auxiliaries will be, *Their Strength is to ſit ſtill.*

When Men look back upon ſuch Occurrences, They are uſually very buſy in tracing out, very forward in explaining, the Cauſes of the unexpected Event: Ready, on one Hand, to charge the *Miſcarriage* to ſome ſudden *Panick* unaccountably ſpread through *the Hoſt*; ſome Miſtake of Orders in the inferior Officers; ſome Miſunderſtandings among their Leaders; or, perhaps, Cowardice in one and Treachery in another: Whilſt, on the other, they are as ready to aſcribe the *Glory* to the Firmneſs and Intrepidity of the victorious Army, and to the Skill and Bravery of their ſucceſsful Commanders. Nor is it to be denied, but that very fair Preſumptions may often appear to direct Men's Judgments in ſuch Caſes. And, as the Doctrine of God's Superintendence can by no Means be pleaded in Excuſe for thoſe *bad* Qualities of particular Men, which He ſometimes permits to *operate* for the Warning or Chaſtiſement of a whole People: ſo neither ſhould it detract from the Praiſe of thoſe *Good* ones, by which He is at other Times pleaſed to ſave Communities from Deſtruction. The Thanks of a Community thus preſerved are juſtly due to thoſe Worthies of every Rank, who have not only in ſuch an Exigency *willingly offered themſelves* to their King and their Country, but in the Article of Danger *played the Men for their People and for the Cities of their GOD*. And, ſhould a

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[a] Prov. XXI. 31. [b] Pſal. CXXVII. 1. [c] Iſ. XXX. 3, 7.

Magnanimous Prince, at the ſame *National* Call, freely quitting the Delicacies of a Court and the *ſoft Cloathing of them that are in Kings' Houſes,* eagerly fly to *the Battle of the Warriour with* all its *confuſed Noiſe and Garments rolled in Blood;* and, regardleſs of any Rigour of Seaſon, any Inclemency of Climate, *put his Life in his Hand,* on the truly intereſting Occaſion: We need not wonder, if *He,* under whoſe Conduct the important Conqueſt has been gained, ſhould be *the Man, whom a* grateful Nation *delighteth to honour.* But ſtill—We muſt look *higher than the higheſt* upon Earth for the *ſupreme* Diſpoſer of all Events, *the only Giver of Victory.* To *Heaven* ſhould our Praiſes be *principally* directed; and there alone can they properly *terminate.* The moſt *mighty Man of Valour* need not think it any Diminution of his Greatneſs to be conſidered as the *Honourable* Inſtrument *by whom the LORD hath given Deliverance unto* His Country: And the moſt illuſtrious Prince, far from being aſhamed, may well be ambitious, of uſing the Acknowledgment of one of the greateſt and moſt ſucceſsful Warriours, King *David* himſelf, — *O GOD the LORD, Thou Strength of my Salvation; THOU haſt covered my Head in the Day of Battle.*

Let me only add, that though Nations (as well as ſingle Perſons) may, out of a preſumptuous Affectation of appearing the *peculiar Favourites* of Heaven, ſometimes be too forward, as well as at other Times too backward, in aſcribing thoſe Occurrences in which they are intereſted to the *ſpecial* Interpoſition of Providence: Yet *Circumſtances*, no doubt, ſometimes attend ſuch Occurrences, not obſcurely directing attentive Minds to the *Almighty* Conductor of them.—If, for inſtance, the Danger has ariſen from ſeemingly ſmall and almoſt imperceptible *Beginnings*; growing, as in a Moment, from an Object of general *Contempt*, into an Occaſion of almoſt as general *Conſternation*: If it has approached the People threatened by it *at a Time* when they were, *humanly* ſpeaking, leſs than ever prepared to withſtand it: If in its Progreſs the Authors of it have been permitted to *gain* Advantages againſt that People conſiderable enough to *alarm* them, without *improving* thoſe Advantages to their *Deſtruction*: — If, on the other Side, Succours have ſeaſonably arrived, ſerving juſt to ſupport the Spirits of an aſtoniſhed Nation, but not ſufficient to diſpell their Fears: If, after this, human Preparations, in Appearance fully adequate to the Purpoſes intended, have been once and again unſucceſsfully applied; and [a] *the Men of* Iſrael *a ſecond Time ſmitten before* Benjamin: In ſhort, if, when *theſe laſt*, upon a *third* Engagement, were ready to ſay, "*They will* certainly *fall before us as at the firſt*," Victory has declared *deciſively* in favour of *Iſrael*: — [b] *Whoſo is wiſe will ponder theſe Things; and* will, both in the Danger and the Deliverance, *underſtand the Loving-Kindneſs of the LORD.*

The Duty of *Thankſgiving* to Almighty GOD for National Deliverances, eſpecially *from the Hand of the Enemy*, being by this Time (I hope) *in general* ſufficiently eſtabliſhed: Tho' I doubt not but your Thoughts are beforehand with me in the *Application*; yet the Occaſion, as well as my preſent Undertaking, calls upon me to conſider a little farther,

II. *Secondly*, The *Reaſonableneſs* of the Duty in *our Particular Caſe*; from a View of the late Situation and Circumſtances of this *Church* and *Nation.*

Now the *Reaſonableneſs of Gratitude* for any particular Deliverance may moſt naturally be made appear by conſidering the *Greatneſs* and Importance of that Deliverance; as *This* again would moſt forcibly be illuſtrated by taking an Eſtimate of thoſe Evils, from which the Perſons concerned have been reſcued on ſuch an Occaſion. An Eſtimate, which we (of *this Part* of the Iſland at leaſt) cannot in the preſent Inſtance, take with any Exactneſs; becauſe (bleſſed be GOD!) we were not left to the *Feeling* of them. But it may be of ſome Uſe to us, to carry our *Imaginations* backward to that Period of Time, when an Armed Force of Rebels was advancing towards us with a rapid Progreſs, and had with an amazing Swiftneſs penetrated into the Heart of this Kingdom. Call to Mind, what Your Apprehenſions were at that Juncture; how hearty You were in Your Deſires, (I hope, I may ſay, how *fervent* in Your *Prayers)* for ſuch a Deliverance as the Gracious Diſpoſer of all Events hath ſince mercifully granted us. And let the Strength of Your *Fears*, and the Ardour of Your *Wiſhes* at that Time, be *ſome Meaſure* for Your *Joy* and *Thankfulneſs* on the preſent Occaſion.

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[a] See Judg. Ch. XX.

[b] Pſal. CVII. 43.

When the late Rebellion had very unnaturally begun to lift up its Head, had received ſome conſiderable Acceſſions, and gained ſome unexpected Advantages, in the *Northern* Part of theſe united Kingdoms; I took Occaſion * (as You may remember) from the *Royal Pſalmiſt*'s Example [a], to recommend to You the great Duty of *Loving our Country*; with a View particularly to its *Peace* and Tranquillity; to its *Proſperity* and Civil Intereſts, including its Laws and Government; and laſtly, to *the Houſe of the LORD our GOD,* or its eſtabliſhed Religion and Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution: And by repreſenting to You the Dangers which at that Time alarmed this Nation in regard to *each* of theſe important Articles; I endeavoured to excite You to *Pray for its Peace,* and by all *proper* Means in Your reſpective Stations to *ſeek its Good.* It may, perhaps, be no unſerviceable Method of ſtirring up our Gratitude *at preſent,* briefly to recollect, what our Sentiments *then* were upon each of theſe Particulars.

To *begin* with what relates to the *Peace* of our *Jeruſalem*.—Was this, before happy Country threatened by an avenging Providence with one of the [b] *ſoreſt* of God's *Judgments,* the devouring Sword; to which He ſeemed to have ſaid in His Anger, "*Sword, go thro'*

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* On Sunday, *Octob.* 6. 1745.

[a] In Pſalm CXXII.

[b] Ezek. XIV. 17, 21.

that Land?" Was every thoughtful Perſon ready, not with an unmanly Dread to anticipate, but with a cool Apprehenſion and humble Acquieſcence in the *Divine* Diſpoſal to prepare himſelf for, a *Return* of thoſe Calamities, which our Forefathers, about a *Century* ago, ſeverely felt from a *ſucceſsful Rebellion*, and a long Civil War? When the *Palaces* of our *Princes*, and *venerable Seats* of our Nobles and *Honourable Men*, inſtead of exhibiting Scenes of Magnificence and Hoſpitality, were converted into Garriſons and Dens for Ravagers and Plunderers: When our *Ports* and *Cities* (among which this ancient and loyal one ſtood eminently diſtinguiſhed) inſtead of flouriſhing with Commerce and improving in Manufactures, were filled with the frightful Images of Siege and Famine, of Slaughter and Deſolation: When our *Univerſities*, thoſe renowned Seminaries for the Education of Youth in the Principles of Piety and Probity, and once ſecure Retreats for Men of Study and Learning, were *compaſſed about with Armies*, and in Danger of having little *taught* in them beſides *the Uſe of the Bow* and of the various Implements of Devaſtation: When our *Villages* ſaw their Huſbandmen, inſtead of firſt *bearing forth good Seed and* in proper Seaſon *coming again with*

Joy and bringing their Sheaves with them, now by a deplorable Reverſe of the Prophecy [a] *beating their Plough-ſhares into Swords and their Pruning-hooks into Spears:* When in *private Families* the cloſeſt Ties of Conſanguinity were torn aſunder, [b] *the Brother delivering up the Brother, and the Father the Child, and* even *Children riſing up againſt their Parents and cauſing them to be put to Death:* In ſhort, When War and Violence were become the Buſineſs and Profeſſion, and ſeemed to have incorporated themſelves, as it were, with the *Genius* of our People; among whom all Diſtinction of Station or Property was well-nigh loſt, almoſt all Notions of Right and Wrong effaced; and ſcarce Spirit or Honeſty enough left to cry out, [c] "*Oh, Thou Sword of the LORD, how long will it be e'er thou be quiet! Put up Thyſelf into Thy Scabbard; reſt and be ſtill!*--Was This, I ſay, the melancholy Proſpect which lately preſented itſelf to our Fears! How ſhould We *thank the LORD for giving us Warning* of ſo tremendous an Evil, without ſuffering us to be utterly undone by it: For ſo ſpeedily, and yet (we truſt) ſo effectually *ſcattering the People that delighted in War*; and for reſtoring to this Nation, that moſt deſireable of Temporal

[a] Iſai. II. 4. [b] Matt. X. 21. [c] Jer. XLVII. 6.

Bleſſings to any Nation, [a] *the Bleſſing of PEACE!*

Again: With Regard to the *Proſperity and Plenteouſneſs of our Jeruſalem*; the Poſſeſſions and Liberties of its Inhabitants, the free Courſe of its Laws, and the Excellency of its Civil Conſtitution of Government.--Recollect what Your *Searchings of Heart* then were, when a rapacious Army had in an hoſtile Manner entered this Kingdom, had actually invaded the Properties of many of our Country-men, and made us ready to apply the following remarkable Deſcription given by the Prophet; [b] *Lo, I will bring a Nation upon You from far, O Houſe of* Iſrael, *ſaith the LORD; it is a mighty Nation, it is an ancient Nation: --- Their Quiver is as an open Sepulchre; they are all mighty Men. And they ſhall eat up thine Harveſt and thy Bread, which thy Sons and thy Daughters ſhould eat: they ſhall eat up thy Flocks and thine Herds: they ſhall eat up thy Vines and thy Fig-trees: they ſhall impoveriſh thy fenced Cities with the Sword.* Call to Remembrance the Time, when *Publick Credit* was greatly endangered, and Trade and Commerce almoſt at a Stand; but eſpecially *that Juncture*, when we were on one Side alarmed by the Approach of lawleſs *Rebels*, and by

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[a] Pſal. XXIX. 11. [b] Jer. V. 15, 16, 17.

Reports of mercileſs *Invaders* on the other. *What Waſting and Deſtruction* did we expect to ſee during the Conteſt, what Ruin to the *entire Subſiſtence* of numberleſs *Families* ſhould *either* of theſe our Enemies be permitted only *for a while* to proſper! But, ſhould *either* for our Sins *finally prevail!* how reaſonably did we apprehend, that the *Nation* itſelf, from being a *powerful Kingdom*, might ſoon be degraded into a *tributary Province:* or at beſt, that our boaſted (I wiſh I could not ſay, abuſed) *Liberties* muſt preſently fall a Sacrifice to uncontrolled Oppreſſion, our *Laws* be once more rendered precarious by a *diſpenſing Power*, and our *Free-holds* (as we had been uſed to call them) thenceforward lie at the Mercy of *arbitrary Will*; whilſt our regular *Seats of Judgment* ſhould no longer be open to receive our Complaints or redreſs our Wrongs. In ſhort, Think how juſtly ſolicitous we then were for our envied Conſtitution, how unwilling to exchange it for any other Form of Government in the known World, and yet in what imminent Danger of being ſoon forced to exchange it for one of the worſt! -- And then tell me, What Praiſes are due to that Gracious Being, who ſo ſeaſonably [a] *removed far off from us the Northern*

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[a] Joel II. 20.

Army; Who permitted the People of this Land to hear of, in part to feel, the Effects of their diſappointed Rage, without *giving us over for a Prey unto them:* [a] *Who delivered* our King and his People *from ſo great a Death, and doth deliver; in whom we truſt that He will yet deliver us!*

Once more: In regard to that *moſt intereſting* Object of every good Man's, every real Patriot's Concern, the *Publick Profeſſion of true Religion.* -- Did our [b] *Hearts* lately *tremble for the Ark of GOD,* for that excellent Church into which we had been baptized, that pure Religion *in the Light* whereof we had, from the firſt Dawnings of our Reaſon, *rejoiced?* Were we earneſtly ſolicitous to preſerve the invaluable Advantages of *primitive* Order, Decency, Purity; yet unable to foretell, how ſoon we might be called upon to give them up, either for the wild Freaks of Enthuſiaſm and Fanaticiſm, or the Superſtition and Idolatry of the *Romiſh* Ritual: Were You apprehenſive (as well You might be) that, inſtead of the Liberty of daily Acceſs to thoſe *Sacred* Volumes, the *Holy Scriptures, which are able* with ſuch Helps as are now offered You *to make You wiſe unto Salvation,* You ſhould for the future be truſted only with ridiculous *Legends*, with idle Tales of *lying Wonders*, or with the abominable *Caſuiſtry* of worſe than heathen *Jeſuits*: That, inſtead of the ſober, grave, intelligible, rational *Services* of the *Engliſh Liturgy*, You muſt ſoon be obliged to attend (I ſay not, to *join in*) extatick Raptures and Idolatrous Addreſſes to *Angels* and *Saints*, often *falſely ſo called*, breathed forth in a Language to You generally unknown: That, inſtead of thoſe few, plain, eaſy, and at the ſame Time decent, ſignificant, inſtructive *Ceremonies* with which You are now acquainted, Your Publick Worſhip muſt be clogged, and Your Devotion embarraſſed, with a Multitude of *Fopperies*, at beſt *ridiculous*, in many Inſtances highly *ſinful*: Or laſtly, if Your own calm Reſolutions, ſupported by *Divine Grace*, ſhould embolden You to *proteſt* manfully and conſtantly againſt theſe and the like Abominations, after the Example of Your *Forefathers*, that You muſt, like them too, be thruſt into *Dungeons*, or forced to *ſeek Your Bread out of deſolate Places!* —— What Holy Tranſports of Joy and Thankfulneſs to Almighty God may we not indulge ourſelves in, eſpecially on this Occaſion; now that *being delivered from the Hands of our Enemies*, we are not only permitted to *ſerve Him without Fear*, but invited by Authority to ſing forth His Praiſes in the *Great Congregation!* now that we not only ourſelves enjoy, but have the delightful Proſpect of tranſmitting to the Ages after us all the Advantages, that perhaps *merely human* Wiſdom can provide, for *Worſhipping the LORD in the Beauty of Holineſs*, and at the ſame Time *in Spirit and in Truth.*

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[a] 2 Cor. I. 10. [b] 1 Sam. IV. 13.

But perhaps this Repreſentation, if not of our *Fears*, however of our *real Danger*, may be thought to be carried too far. "No ſuch Interruption was intended, at leaſt for any Time, to the publick Peace; no ſuch Violation of private Property; no ſuch Alteration in the Laws of our Country, or the Profeſſion of our Religion, as has been here ſuppoſed. The late Adventurer for the Crown of theſe Realms, had his *Pretenſions* ſucceeded, would (it ſeems) have continued our Civil Affairs, at leaſt our Religious Eſtabliſhment, on the ſame Footing on which they now ſtand, or perhaps have been graciouſly pleaſed to have placed them on a better." --- But, my Brethren, *let no Man deceive You with vain Words.* Beſides the Injury that muſt have been done by ſuch a Change to our *Gracious Sovereign*, whoſe mild and juſt Government (to put it at the loweſt) has, ſurely, little deſerved ſuch a Return from his People: Can any conſiderate Perſon perſuade himſelf, that, in our preſent Situation, the late Invader of our Country could have *peacefully* diſpoſſeſſed Him of His Throne, could without numberleſs Acts of Violence have mounted into it, or without inconceivable Sacrifices of Blood and Treaſure have kept himſelf in it? But the Conſequences of a *merely ſecular* Kind I may leave to be explained by others in a more proper Place: nor indeed will the Time permit me to purſue at large *thoſe* of an *higher* and more laſting Concern. Only thus much I muſt have Leave to ſay, that if ever there was a deluſive Imagination, *This* ſhould ſeem to be one, -- That a Prince bred up in all the Bigotry of the *Church of Rome*, continually beſet by its zealous Adherents, and ſupported by ſuch *Allies* (rather let me ſay, dictated to by ſuch *Maſters)* as have never yet wanted Inclination to extirpate (what they call) the *Northern Hereſy*, would at once have become *diſpoſed*, or if diſpoſed have been *at Liberty*, to patronize, or ſo much as to protect, THE *Church of England*. A *Church of England*, indeed, he would, no doubt, have uſed his utmoſt Efforts towards *effectually* patronizing among us: that is, *A Church*, which he would have been moſt ready, when he ſhould have found himſelf able, to *call* by *that* Name: But *a Church* in reality as different from that *now* ſo called, as *Darkneſs is from Light*; as *Superſtition* is from *rational Devotion*; as *Idolatry* is from *Decency*; as a Spirit of *Perſecution* is from the Spirit of the *Goſpel*; as *the Yoke of Bondage* is from that *Liberty, wherewith CHRIST hath made us Free.*

Upon the Whole then: If the *Peace*, the *Proſperity*, the very *Being* of our Country as a free *Proteſtant* Nation, be of any Concern with us; We may in ſome Degree eſtimate the *Importance* of the Deliverance lately wrought for us, and the *Reaſonableneſs* of our *Thankſgiving* for it.--But, after all, whether This Diſpenſation of Providence ſhall *continue* to be a *Bleſſing* to us, or ſhall *finally encreaſe our Condemnation*, muſt in great Meaſure depend *upon ourſelves*. Let us then go on to conſider,

III. *Thirdly*, The *proper Method* of expreſſing our Thankfulneſs for our late Deliverance; And the *Influence* It ought to have on our Conduct for the future.

And here, that the Expreſſions of our Gratitude ſhould be as *Publick* and *National* as the Benefits that call for them are, is a Point which I need not inſiſt on: The preſent Solemnity proceeds upon this Suppoſition; and Your Attendance in this Holy Place implies Your Aſſent to it. Nor will I doubt but that the *Sincerity* of Your Religious Acknowledgments has born ſome Proportion to the *Reality* and Greatneſs of the Bleſſings You have been acknowledging. The great Danger is, that our Thankfulneſs ſhould not prove equally *laſting* and *efficacious*; but that, as on former Occaſions, after obſerving a Day in *ſinging Praiſes* to our Almighty Deliverer, we ſhould *within a while forget His Works, and* no longer *abide His Counſel: Not knowing,* or not duly conſidering, *that the Goodneſs of GOD leadeth* Nations as well as ſingle Perſons *to Repentance*; and that, upon a Recovery from any *dangerous Diſorder,* our LORD's Caution is equally applicable to both, "*Behold Thou art made whole; ſin no more, leſt a worſe Thing come unto Thee.*"

The Truth is, ſuch *merely Occaſional* Services to Almighty GOD as proceed no farther, by no means anſwer His gracious Purpoſe in *requiring* them *at our Hands.* An All-perfect Being *needs* not our Thanks: nor can He receive any *real Acceſſion* either to His Glory or His Happineſs from our Praiſes. When therefore He is pleaſed to accept and even to demand, theſe feeble Eſſays of our Gratitude; He is ſo, partly becauſe they are a Tribute juſtly due to Him, but chiefly that they may improve in Us a ſuitable Temper of Mind: A Temper, which ſhews itſelf far more certainly, and more acceptably, in Men's *Lives* than by their *Lips:* And which, in the preſent Caſe, muſt exert itſelf not only in a general Reformation, but particularly in conſtant Endeavours to avert Thoſe Evils for the future from which we have for the preſent been reſcued; and to perpetuate thoſe Advantages, which have lately been ſo ſeaſonably preſerved to Us. And

Firſt, Hath a Gracious Providence once more *given Peace in our Borders*, when our Country ſeemed ready to be laid waſte by thoſe moſt dreadful of all *Foes, them of* Her *own Houſehold?* Among other Expreſſions of our Gratitude for ſuch a Bleſſing, let us labour to root out of our own Breaſts thoſe *Luſts, from whence,* as from their Original Source, *come Wars and Fightings among us;* and let us, in their Stead, cultivate thoſe heaven-born Affections, which are at once the Glory and Happineſs of *Brethren dwelling together in Unity.*

Long have the People of this Nation been unhappily divided by *Party-Diſtinctions* and

Names of Reproach: which too often fatally hinder *Men from being of one Mind in an Houſe*; and *ſeparate* thoſe, whom both Duty and Intereſt call upon to be *chief Friends*: which are apt to occaſion an entire Confuſion of Characters among Men; while all real Merit with its Attendant, Reputation, is, by each Party reſpectively, confined to Thoſe of their own Denomination, and held by the ſtrange Tenure of Loudneſs and Impetuoſity for it. In this imperfect State of human Affairs and human Paſſions, *it cannot* indeed *be*, but *that Offences* of this Kind *will come*: But the preſent ſeems as promiſing a Seaſon as can well be expected, if not for wholly extirpating this baneful *Root of Bitterneſs*, at leaſt for checking the Growth of it. The Unanimity lately ſhewn throughout this Kingdom was confeſſedly of the utmoſt Importance to us all. Nor let it be ſuppoſed, that the like Harmony is now become either uſeleſs or impracticable. The true Intereſts of our *King* and our *Country* are certainly in themſelves united: And, though ſome Diverſity of Sentiments about the Methods of promoting them will ever ſubſiſt among ſuch Creatures as Men, and will generally appear in a free Country: Yet ſurely, unleſs Men are *unreaſonably* fond of their own Opinions, mere *Di-*

verſity need not degenerate into *Strife*, nor will *Zeal* work itſelf up into *Rage* and Fury. [a]*Only by Pride cometh Contention; but with the well-adviſed, the lowly, is Wiſdom:* -- even That [b]*Wiſdom, which is from above; which is firſt pure, then peaceable; gentle, and eaſy to be entreated.*

If, however, Inconveniences in this reſpect ſhould not always be prevented: If too many will ſtill be more ſolicitous for the Prevalence of their own Schemes than about the Promotion of the general Good: If Some will go on groundleſsly ſuſpecting, and thence needleſsly diſguſting, their well-diſpoſed Neighbours; whilſt the [c]*Words* of Others *grow fierce becauſe their Advice is not firſt had*, and their Country ſerved exactly in their Way: If, in ſhort, warm *Zealots* on all Sides will unneceſſarily [d]*kindle a Fire and compaſs themſelves about with Sparks*; and, after *walking in the* Heat *of their own Fire and in the Sparks that they have kindled*, will chooſe to *lie down in Sorrow:* Let each of us at leaſt *keep his own Heart with all Diligence*; guarding againſt the *firſt Motions* towards all ſuch Vehemence in himſelf, and avoiding as much as poſſible the *Contagion* of it in others: Convinced, that Nothing in this World can recompenſe the Loſs of *a Meek and Quiet Spirit*; which is not only a preſent *Ornament* and Bleſſing to *every one that retaineth* it, but a neceſſary Preparative for that *peaceful* Region, where the harſh Voice of *Party* ſhall not be heard, where Enmity and Diſcord ſhall have no Being.

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[a] Prov. XIII. 10. and IX. 2. [b] Jam. III. 17. [c] 2 Sam. XIX. 43. [d] Iſai. L. 11.

Secondly, If we ſincerely rejoice at the late ſeaſonable Reſcue of the Perſons and Properties of our Countrymen, and of the Liberties, Laws and Government of our Country; Let our Thankfulneſs expreſs itſelf in hearty Endeavours to contribute our Share towards the *Proſperity* and *Plenteouſneſs* of our *Jeruſalem*, by an honeſt Induſtry in our proper Stations; without making needleſs Excurſions from thence into the Provinces of others, particularly of thoſe whom Providence hath ſet over us; or *Meddling with them that are given to Change*.

How obvious ſoever it may ſeem, it can hardly be too often inculcated, that every Man's *immediate* Concern is the prudent Regulation of his own Conduct, and the faithful Diſcharge of his own Duty. By the Behaviour of other Men, eſpecially of Men in exalted Stations, our private Intereſts may indeed remotely, and thoſe of the Publick more nearly, be affected: And I am neither ſuppoſing it poſſible for a true Lover of his Country to be wholly inſenſible of what relates to its Credit and Proſperity, nor that it is always unlawful to declare his well-grounded Sentiments concerning ſuch Tranſactions. But then, even in ſuch Caſes, there is a *ſuitable Reſpect* due to *Authority* whereſoever placed, and more eſpecially to that of the *ſupreme Magiſtrate:* Who, not only on Account of the *honourable Relation* in which He ſtands to GOD, but alſo as being our *Civil Parent*, may reaſonably expect from us the ſame ſacred Regard to his Perſon, the ſame tender Concern for his Reputation, the ſame Unwillingneſs raſhly to receive unfavourable Impreſſions or to ſpread unkind Reports, to which our *Natural Parents* are confeſſedly entitled. And after all, a diligent Attendance on the Buſineſs of a Man's proper Calling will ordinarily be found his beſt Method of expreſſing a reaſonable Affection for his Country, and an excellent Preſervative againſt unreaſonable Anxiety about it.

Whether therefore our Superiours ſhall at all Times diſcharge *their* reſpective Offices to our Satisfaction or not; be it our Care punctually to anſwer the Demands of *our own.* The Truth is, the Conduct of Perſons at a

Diſtance from us is a Point, about which we may be little qualified to judge; and, ſhould we proceed to paſs Sentence, our Cenſures might probably be uncharitable, at beſt impertinent: But *our own Buſineſs* is what we both may and ought to be well acquainted with: This therefore we may ſafely *ſtudy*, and in this we may uſefully employ ourſelves. And happy would it be for the *whole Community*, were the Activity of its ſeveral Members thus regularly employed: happy for *each Member*, could he be perſwaded thus to confine his Attention to his own Affairs. *Theſe* would then be ſo carefully, and, by the Bleſſing of Providence, ſo ſucceſsfully managed, that Men would ſeldom find any Temptation *at Home* for endeavouring to diſturb Settlements, or to throw Things into Confuſion: They would have little Leiſure or Inclination for that *ſpeaking Evil of Dignities*, or thoſe undutiful *Murmurings* and *Complainings* againſt them, which are often ſo many *Steps* towards Sedition and Rebellion in the Perſons themſelves; or however (as we have found by fatal Experience) may, where there is no ſuch Deſign, give Encouragement to them in Others.

And let none of us make light of *Sedition* and *Rebellion*: Which, unleſs Principles themſelves are become liable to Variation, can never be conſidered as indifferent and harmleſs Things, by any real Friend to the ſocial Intereſts of Mankind, any ſincere Profeſſor of the Religion of the Bleſſed JESUS, or any true Son of that Church, whoſe Honour it has ever been conſtantly to inculcate the Duty of [a] *Subjection to the higher Powers.* "Who theſe *higher Powers* are," will not (I hope) now be made a *Queſtion*, after the preſent Settlement of the Crown has taken Place thro' ſo long a Courſe of Years, and has been over and over recognized (as it was at firſt eſtabliſhed) by the ſupreme Wiſdom of the Nation. Or, if real Scruples ſhould remain with any in this Generation; even theſe, I preſume, could hardly juſtify *private Perſons* in attempting by Violence and Bloodſhed to [b] *remove Kings and ſet up Kings:* This *Work* the Almighty claims as a Branch of His Prerogative; and, as He needs not the Aſſiſtance of frail Mortals to enable Him to *finiſh* it, to Him, methinks, Men really ſcrupulous ſhould chooſe to leave it, to be accompliſhed at His own Time and in His own Way.--But as to Others, who have no Scruples of this Kind; who have acknowledged the Lawfulneſs of the eſtabliſhed Government, and for many Years *enjoyed great Quietneſs* and Safety under it; and who, if they have not been farther obliged by any perſonal Favours, have however, in the Courſe of a long Reign, been unprovoked by any real Acts of Oppreſſion or Tyranny, any Violation of private Property, any Infraction of the Liberty, Laws, or Juſtice of the Community: For any ſuch Perſons, (eſpecially if to all other Ties of Gratitude and Duty they have added that moſt awful one, *the Oath of GOD;)* to *take the Sword* againſt their King and their Fellow-Subjects; to do their Part towards involving their Country in all the Calamities of an inteſtine War, and (in Caſe even of Succeſs) towards entailing Slavery upon their Poſterity: This ſurely muſt be a Proceeding --- of which I will only here ſay, I bleſs God that ſo few, comparatively ſpeaking ſo extremely few, of thoſe who call themſelves *Engliſhmen*, ſtand chargeable with the aggravated Guilt of it.

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[a] Rom. XIII. 1. [b] Dan. II. 21.

Laſtly; Has the good Providence of God once more interpoſed in the Protection of that *excellent Church* whereof we are Members, from the Dangers to which it appeared lately expoſed? If our Thankfulneſs flow from a *juſt Value* for this Bleſſing, it will expreſs itſelf in a *conſtant Watchfulneſs* for the Preſervation of the ſame happy Conſtitution; in an *exemplary Attendance* on its Worſhip and its Ordinances; and, moſt of all, in an *Improvement anſwerable* to thoſe Advantages, which we ſtill enjoy by the Continuance of it.

As to our Adverſaries of the Church of *Rome*, let our late Apprehenſions inſpire us, though not with any Aſperity againſt their Characters, or Rancour againſt their Perſons, yet with an irreconcileable Averſion to their unchriſtian Tenets, their corrupt and abominable Practices. Notwithſtanding all their Artifices, notwithſtanding any favourable Opinions we may charitably entertain of the Intentions of particular Members of That Communion; be we well aſſured, that *the Ruſt of Popery* itſelf *hath not yet been altogether wiped away*. Of its Perfidy and untolerating Spirit we have [*] *recent* Inſtances in ſome Neighbouring Countries: And, if *we ourſelves* have not ſeen, yet *our Fathers have told us*, ſome unpromiſing Experiments of its *tender Mercies* and its Method of keeping *Faith with Hereticks*, that have more than once been made in our own. And, [a] *after all that has* formerly *come upon us*, after all that we lately dreaded, *for our Evil Deeds*; *ſeeing*

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[*] See a Tract, lately Publiſhed, intituled, *Popery always the Same*. Printed by *J. Oliver*. 1746.

[a] Ezra IX. 13, 14.

our GOD hath puniſhed us leſs than our Iniquities deſerved, and hath given us ſuch a Deliverance as this: Should we again break His Commandments by joining with the People of theſe Abominations: What could we reaſonably look for, but that He would *be angry with us, till He ſhould have conſumed us, ſo that there ſhould be no Remnant nor Eſcaping?*

Far be it from us, at the ſame Time, to let our Zeal againſt *Popery* be, like that of its deluded Votaries for it, *a Zeal without Knowledge.* Yet ſuch it moſt certainly will be, if our Deteſtation of a corrupt Religion terminate (as it is fatally apt to do) in an Indifference towards all Religion; if our *Abhorrence of Idols* betray us into the *Commiſſion of Sacrilege*; if in paring away the Abuſes, we wound the Vitals, of Chriſtianity. Whilſt we juſtly ridicule the legendary Accounts of *Popiſh Miracles,* let us carefully guard againſt all contemptuous Thoughts of thoſe *truly wonderful Works,* concerning which we have all the *Evidence* that diſtant Facts can want or admit of, that they were openly wrought in the Sight of Multitudes, for Purpoſes highly worthy of God: Whilſt We reject Thoſe *ſpurious Articles* of Faith, which are unſupported by Scripture and are plain Contradictions both to our Reaſon and our Senſes; let us preſerve a juſt Reverence for thoſe *really Chriſtian Doctrines*, which though they may, and from the Nature of their Objects muſt, in ſome reſpects tranſcend both, yet contradict neither. Let us not in ſo undiſtinguiſhing a Manner condemn the extravagant Claims of the *Papal Hierarchy* to an abſolute *Dominion over the Faith*, and Tyranny over the Properties and Perſons, of *CHRIST's Flock*, as to diſcard all ſuch Superiority of *Order*, all ſuch Regularity of *Miniſtration*, all ſuch Authority of *Inſtruction*, and Power of ſpiritual *Diſcipline*, as He *really* left with His *Apoſtles* to be tranſmitted to their Succeſſors *unto the End of the World*. In ſhort, Let no Friend to the *Reformation* give the *Romaniſts* the greateſt Advantage they ever have againſt us, by vindicating our Separation from them on ſuch Principles, as, if regularly purſued, would not leave our Bleſſed Lord any *viſible Church*, any publick Profeſſion of His Religion, upon Earth.

Above all; let our Thankfulneſs for the Preſervation, and our Zeal for the Honour, of our Holy Religion ſhew itſelf by, that beſt Method of Expreſſion, its Influence and Efficacy on our Tempers and our Lives. In vain ſhall we boaſt ourſelves Members of the pureſt Church, if our Converſations and Manners are not at all purified by it: Little will it avail us, that the moſt edifying Inſtructions, the moſt heavenly Ordinances, have been continually open and eaſily acceſſible to us, if we remain unedified by the one, and but rarely attend, or for Form's ſake only frequent, the other. Unreformed Profeſſors, tho' no juſt Objection, are in Fact a Diſgrace, to the moſt happily reformed Profeſſion of Chriſtianity: And *better had it been for us not to have known* the Means of Grace which our excellent Church holds forth to us, if we continue *barren and unfruitful* under them; if our Opportunities and Advantages be not anſwered by a proportionable *Growth in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jeſus CHRIST.*

I am ſenſible, it is high Time that I ſhould here releaſe You: Yet, I am unwilling to cloſe this Diſcourſe without ſubjoining one ſhort but momentous, and (I truſt) not wholly unſuitable, Reflection upon what has been ſaid.

Among the ſeveral Articles of *Danger* which lately threatened our Country, I have all along conſidered, not only the *Civil Rights* of the Community, but the *Properties* of particular Perſons, as being nearly affected. And indeed, whilſt Men live *in* this *World*, neither Reaſon nor Religion require them to live *wholly above* all Concern for the neceſſary Accommodations, or even the Comforts of it. Give me Leave however to ſay, that the Situation of Affairs, which we have been recollecting, has not had all that Influence upon our Minds that it is fitted to have, if it has not left upon them very lively Impreſſions of the Precariouſneſs of all earthly Poſſeſſions, the Vanity of accumulating them, and the Danger of placing any Confidence in them.-- To reflect (as, I ſuppoſe, Thouſands muſt naturally have reflected) how ſuddenly the moſt Opulent, notwithſtanding all their ſuppoſed *Securities*, might have been deſpoiled of every Thing in this World: how the Man that could ſay within himſelf, [a] "*I am rich, and increaſed with Goods, and have Need of Nothing*," might the next Hour have found himſelf *wretched and miſerable and poor and naked!*--Muſt not This make us *feel* the Propriety of the Expreſſions, (at the ſame Time expoſing the Folly of the Practices) of [b] *ſetting our Eyes on that which* IS NOT, of [c] *wearying ourſelves for* VERY VANITY, of [d] *truſting in* UNCERTAIN *Riches?* Muſt it not put us upon ſecuring an Intereſt, if any ſuch *can* be ſecured, abſolutely out of the Reach of all ſuch Caſualties as here alarm our Fears? --- Now, ſuch an Intereſt our Holy Religion propoſes to us all: And the following Advice of its *Divine* Author may be at once Your Direction and Your Comfort upon this Point: -- [a] *Lay not up for Yourſelves Treaſures upon Earth; where Moth and Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves break through and ſteal: But lay up for Yourſelves Treaſures in Heaven; where neither Moth nor Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through nor ſteal.*

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[a] Rev. III. 17. [b] Prov. XXIII. 5. [c] Hab. II. 13.
[d] 1 Tim. VI. 17.

May We all wiſely make Choice of this [b] *Good Part which*, when once obtained, *ſhall not be taken away from* Us! and in the mean Time, that we may [c] *lead quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godlineſs and Honeſty*, let our *Supplications, Prayers and Interceſſions be*, by way of Concluſion, added to our *Giving of Thanks.*

“ Grant, O Lord, that *All that are in*
“ *Authority* may, in their reſpective Capaci-
“ ties, *conſcientiouſly* ſtudy to promote *Thy*
“ *Glory* and the *Good* of Thy *People.* In an
“ eſpecial Manner bleſs and defend Thy Ser-
“ vant, our Sovereign, King *GEORGE:* Let

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[a] Matt. VI. 19, 20. [b] Luke X. 42. [c] 1 Tim. II. 1, 2.

" *His Throne be eſtabliſhed in Righteouſneſs*;
" and *on Himſelf* and His Poſterity *let the*
" *Crown* for ever *flouriſh*. -- And *Grant, that*
" *the Courſe of this World may be ſo peaceably*
" *ordered by Thy Governance, that Thy*
" *CHURCH may joyfully ſerve Thee in all*
" *Godly Quietneſs; thro' Jeſus CHRIST our*
" *LORD*. Amen.

A

SERMON

Preached at

St. *MARY*'s in *OXFORD*,

AT THE

ASSIZES,

On *Thurſday*, *March* 8. 1753.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the HIGH-SHERIFF
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The THIRD EDITION.

Psalm LXXXIX. 7.

GOD is greatly to be feared in the Aſſembly of the Saints; and to be had in Reverence of All them that are *about Him.*

AMIDST ſeveral humane Deſigns ſet on foot, and *worthy Deeds done*, in different Parts of *this Nation*, there is however *one* Appearance which darkens the Proſpect of Good Men: I mean That Indifference about the Worſhip of Almighty God, which hath for ſome Time been deſcending, like other Faſhions, from Perſons of Station and Fortune to the Body of the People. Hence We ſee even that *ſmall Portion* of Time, which our Creator from the Beginning reſerved for His own Service, ſo frequently proſtituted to the Purpoſes of Worldly Buſineſs or Pleaſure.

Inſtead of devoutly approaching *the Courts of the LORD*, with their reſpective Families, *One goes to his Farm, Another to his Merchandiſe.* An unneceſſary Journey or an impertinent Viſit, any Thing or even Nothing, ſhall be ſufficient to detain Men from paying their *weekly* Acknowledgments to that bountiful Hand, from which they are *every Moment* receiving *Life and Breath and all Things!*

A diſcouraging Symptom this, and ſuch as may well alarm every Lover of our Country! For certain it is, and the Experience of Ages confirms the Obſervation, that a General Neglect of God's Publick Worſhip is cloſely connected with a Decay of every Thing Great or Glorious in a Nation: And, as it is immediately *the Reproach*, ſo doth it, naturally as well as judicially, bring on the Ruin, *of any People.* I will not ſay, but that in civilized States, whilſt the Remains of a liberal Education continue to operate, a certain Decency of Manners, aided by a Senſe of Honour, may *for a While* preſerve tolerable Order, and even produce ſome beneficial Effects, in the *upper Ranks* of Men. But, among *leſs cultivated* Minds, the Degeneracy will ſhew itſelf much ſooner; rendering that Strength and Activity, on the Application whereof ſo much muſt in every Community always depend, not barely uſeleſs, but miſchievous to the Publick, and often fatal to the unhappy Wretches themſelves. I wiſh we had fewer Occaſions to reflect on the Condition of our own People in this Reſpect. But we all know, how frequent it is for Thoſe among them, who are brought by their Crimes to ignominious Ends, to date the Commencement of their Ruin from their Ceaſing to *keep GOD's Sabbaths, and to reverence His Sanctuary.* And, when We trace this Neglect through its ſtill more momentous Conſequences beyond the preſent Life; the ſpreading Contagion muſt ſtill more ſenſibly affect every Friend to Mankind, and render it ſtill more incumbent on *Us,* in our *publick Exhortations,* as far as We may, to ſtop the Progreſs of it.

An *Attempt* to contribute in *any* Degree towards an End ſo deſirable, will not, I truſt, be thought wholly unſuitable to the Buſineſs of our preſent Aſſembling. For which Purpoſe, however, I ſhall not affect to entertain This venerable Audience with any laboured Diſquiſitions. Better ſhould I hope to anſwer the Deſign of this Appointment, could I, by bringing to Your Remembrance a few *plain Truths,* effectually engage All that hear me *This Day,* to pay a like decent Attendance at *other Times* upon the Worſhip of That All-perfect Being; Who is *very greatly to be feared in the Aſſembly of the Saints; and to be had in Reverence of All them that are about Him.*

By the *Fear of GOD* is not ſeldom in Holy Scripture meant the *Whole* of our Duty. But we may here underſtand it in a *more reſtrained* and proper Senſe; as denoting that *holy Awe* and profound Veneration, which God's adorable Perfections demand from the whole *Rational* Creation: For it is *This* which ſeems to have made the moſt powerful Impreſſion upon the *Pſalmiſt*'s Mind, in the Paſſage before Us. --- [a] *O LORD,* ſays he, *the very Heavens ſhall praiſe Thy wonderous Works, and thy Truth in the Congregation of the Saints: For what is He among the Clouds that ſhall be compared unto the LORD? or who is he among the Gods, that ſhall be like unto the LORD?*-- Full of the ſublime Idea, he breaks forth again: [b] *O LORD GOD of Hoſts, Who is like unto Thee! Thy Truth, moſt mighty LORD, is on every Side. Thou ruleſt the Raging of the Sea; Thou ſtilleſt the Waves thereof when they ariſe:* --- *The Heavens are Thine, the Earth alſo is Thine: Thou haſt laid the Foundation of the round World, and all that therein is.* ---In theſe and the like exalted Strains doth the pious *Pſalmiſt* ſet forth the Power and Majeſty of GOD, and his abſolute Sovereignty over both the Natural and Moral World.

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[a] Pſal. LXXXIX. 5, 6.

[b] V. 8, 9, 11.

A due Contemplation of GOD's glorious Attributes, --- His *Eternity*, by which He *is from Everlaſting to Everlaſting* --- His *Immenſity*, by which *He fills Heaven and Earth* --- His *All-powerful Arm*, *with* which *Nothing is impoſſible* --- and His *All-ſeeing Eye*, to which *our moſt ſecret Thoughts are naked and open* --- muſt needs fill the Mind with Wonder and Aſtoniſhment. And accordingly this *Fear of GOD*, this juſt Apprehenſion of his tranſcendent Perfections, hath in all Ages kept-pace with Men's other illuſtrious Qualities; and hath ever exerted itſelf moſt eminently in the moſt eminent Perſonages. From *This* We find holy *Job* thus admoniſhing his Friends, [a] *Shall not his Excellency make You afraid, and his Dread fall upon You?* And, as to himſelf, [b] *Therefore* (ſaith he) *am I troubled at His Preſence; when I conſider, I am afraid of Him.* From *This*, *Moſes*, in a Mixture of devout Fear and holy Tranſport, cries out, [c] *Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, glorious in Holineſs, fearful in Praiſes, doing Wonders!* And, (to multiply no more Inſtances) from a Contemplation of this Kind, we have the Prophet *Jeremiah* thus addreſſing the Almighty. [a] *Forasmuch as there is none like unto Thee, O LORD; Thou art great, and thy Name is great in Might; Who would not fear Thee, O King of Nations?*

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[a] Job. XIII. 11. [b] — XXIII. 15. [c] Exod. XV. 11.

And, if GOD is thus entitled to our Fear on Account of His *excellent Greatneſs* in Himſelf, He is ſtill more ſo when contemplated under Thoſe *awful Relations* He ſtands in to Us, both as *Men* and as *Chriſtians*: In the former View, as He is our *Creator*, *Preſerver*, *Governour*, and *Judge*; in the latter, as He is our *Redeemer*, and *Sanctifier*. It were eaſy to enlarge upon each of theſe Conſiderations; in order to impreſs on all our Minds (what cannot be too ſtrongly there impreſſed) a devout Veneration for That Great and Good Being, who, on ſo many Accounts, nay even [b] *becauſe there is Forgiveneſs with Him, ought to be feared.*

But I muſt not *now* detain You with any Illuſtration of theſe Particulars. *The Fear of GOD is* indeed *the Beginning*, but, whilſt confined within the Mind, is *only the Beginning of* Religious *Wiſdom*. Our Veneration for the Deity muſt diffuſe its Influence throughout our *whole Conduct*; and muſt, at proper Intervals, expreſs itſelf in *Acts* of Homage and *Adoration:* It muſt accompany Us to *Places* ſet apart for Sacred Purpoſes; and, by at once regulating our Behaviour and animating our Performances there, muſt render Both in ſome Meaſure ſuited to That tremendous Being, before whom we more immediately preſent ourſelves on ſuch ſolemn Occaſions. — *GOD is greatly to be feared in the Aſſembly of the Saints; and to be had in Reverence of All them that are about Him.*

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[a] Jer. X. 6, 7. [b] Pſal. CXXX. 4.

From the Words, conſidered in *This* View, I might take Occaſion not only to treat of the *General Duty*, but to recommend the *Principal Requiſites*, of Publick Worſhip. But the Illuſtration of the *Duty* — *Firſt*, By *Conſiderations* drawn from *Reaſon* and *Experience* — *Secondly*, By *Inforcements* founded on the Authority of *Revelation*—and *Laſtly*, By a *Reflection* or two applicable to the *preſent Occaſion* — will employ all the Time that I may preſume to take from Your other Engagements on This Day.

I. It will be neither eaſy nor neceſſary, under the *Firſt* of Theſe Heads, to preſerve the Suggeſtions of *Reaſon* and the Authorities from *Scripture* wholly *ſeparate* from each other. The *Former*, we have Cauſe to think, if *left to itſelf*, would have given us but *very little* Aſſiſtance, on *This* Subject eſpecially; Nor would I be underſtood to aſcribe the following Conſiderations to its *ſole* Diſcovery. All I here mean is, for the Sake of *Method*, to *begin* with ſuch Arguments in Favour of Publick Worſhip as may ſeem deducible — from the *Relation* we ſtand in to *Almighty GOD* — from the *Circumſtances* of *Mankind* about us — and from the *Conſciouſneſs* of what paſſes *within ourſelves*; *abſtracting* for the preſent from any Divine Injunction or *Poſitive Law* for the ſame Purpoſe.

1. And *Firſt*, Let us conſider, how this Matter appears in the Views of *Reaſon* and Experience; more particularly in reſpect of our *Obligations* to *Almighty GOD*.

"That there *is* a *GOD*," and "that He *is to be worſhipped*," are Truths, which I will preſume need no Proof in this Place. Should it be ſaid, "This Worſhip is a Tribute, which may be paid within a Man's *own Breaſt*;" it will readily be granted, that the Payment of it ought always to *begin* there. But, beſides thoſe *Perſonal* Conſiderations which may offer themſelves more properly hereafter; what

I would *here* obſerve, as at leaſt highly *conſonant* to *Nature*, is, that not only God's *Authority* muſt be *revered* in our *own Minds*, but our Senſe of it expreſſed, and His *Name glorified before Men*. *The Glory of GOD is*, or ſhould be, the End purſued by the Whole Creation: It is *inceſſantly declared* by the *Irrational*, and even the *Inanimate*, Parts of it; and ought ſurely to be by *Man* ſet forth with no leſs Conſtancy; becauſe what the others perform by *neceſſary* Courſe, may be *freely* paid by him, as his *Reaſonable Service*.

But now, in order to promote God's Glory, we muſt make our Regard for it *viſible*; we muſt reverence Him *publickly*, and *confeſs Him before Men*. If His *Name* may be *hallowed*, and His Perfections recognized, in the Worſhip of the Cloſet; ſuch Acts, of which God and our own Conſciences are the only Witneſſes, cannot exert any *direct* Influence on thoſe about us. Whereas, by [a] *the Light* of our Devotion *ſhining before Men*, we may engage *them alſo to glorify our Father who is in Heaven*. Whilſt, by [b] *worſhipping the LORD in the Beauty of Holineſs*, we ourſelves appear to *ſtand in Awe of Him*, we *tell it out among the Heathen*, though not in ſo many Words, yet with ſtill greater Efficacy, *that the LORD is King.*

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[a] Matt. V. 16. [b] XCVI. 9, 10.

There is not perhaps among Mankind an Appearance more declarative of GOD's Glory, than that of a numerous, yet regular, Congregation, met together in a Place decently adorned and properly ſet apart for ſacred Purpoſes, uniformly breathing forth the *humble Deſires* or pious Tranſports of their Souls, to His *Name, which is great, wonderful, and holy!* Should any Perſons, out of mere Curioſity, approach ſuch holy Solemnities; they cannot (one would think) remain wholly unaffected; but may well be as [a] *Saul* himſelf when *among the Prophets* more than once was, caught by the almoſt-irreſiſtible Impreſſion. [b] *If the whole Church be come together into one Place,—and there come in,* on ſo ſtriking an Occaſion, *One that believeth not, or One unlearned; he is convinced of All, he is judged of All: And thus are the Secrets of his Heart made manifeſt; and ſo, falling down on his Face he will worſhip GOD, and report that GOD is in You of a Truth.*

2. And hence, *Secondly,* As a Regard to *GOD's Glory* requires our Publick Acknowledgments, ſo muſt the Principle that is next

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[a] 1 Sam. X. 11. and—XIX. 24. [b] 1 Cor. XIV. 23, 24, 25.

to it in Dignity; I mean, *Good will towards Men.*

Indeed, ſo cloſely are the Glory of God and the Good of Mankind connected in this reſpect, that whatever promotes the Former muſt in proportion be ſubſervient to the Latter; and what hath juſt been obſerved in Illuſtration of the foregoing Article may eaſily be accommodated to the Proof of This. We may, in our more *ſecret* Devotions, *pray for* the Converſion or the Improvement of other Men. But then, what Influence ſoever our *Interceſſions* may be ſuppoſed to have towards their ſpiritual Advantage, our *Examples* can have none. *Theſe*, to make them beneficial, muſt be *viſible*. Which Conſideration alone, could we urge no other, ought ſurely to have ſome Weight with Perſons of ample Fortunes and ſuperiour Rank. For, ſuppoſing at preſent that Men of Taſte and Refinement *could* perform *their own* Duty to God in private only, with ſufficient Regularity and Succeſs; it ſhould however be remembered, that *all Men cannot receive this Saying:* Leſs elevated Minds will ever be incapable of keeping alive their Devotion by ſuch purely ſpiritual Addreſſes to the Divine Being: And yet, certainly, ſome Regard muſt be *due* to the Souls of Thoſe Perſons, by whoſe Induſtry and Fidelity *the* [a] *State of the World,* and the Grandeur of their Superiours in particular, *is* principally *maintained.*

But the Truth is, Men who pay no outward Regard to the Worſhip of GOD will not generally, nor can They reaſonably, be ſuppoſed to have much Concern about His Being or Providence. And, whilſt the Bulk of Mankind take, as in fact They ordinarily will take, the Patterns of their Conduct, nay even their very Notions of Duty, from Men of Eminence and Authority; ſhould *Theſe* by a total Neglect of the Publick Offices of Religion give Occaſion to ſuſpect, that *GOD is* ſcarcely *in all their Thoughts*; what muſt ſoon become of the *Piety,* and (by eaſy Conſequence) of the *Morals* of their Inferiours and Dependents, is not hard to ſay. In plain Truth, Men of Figure and Affluence would do well to reflect, how much *their own* Eaſe, Safety, and Proſperity, muſt ever depend on the *Principles* of *them of low Degree.* And, if, by the Degeneracy of theſe latter, the former ſhould find [b] *their Houſes* leſs *ſafe from Fear,* and their Perſons more expoſed to Inſult and Violence; They muſt not be ſurprized at the Diſorders introduced by their own Examples: Nor have they any *Right* to complain, when Thoſe, whom their Practice is continually teaching [a] *not to fear GOD,* ſo far improve upon the Hint given them, as *not to regard Man.*—But to proceed.

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[a] Eccluſ. XXXVIII. 64. [b] Job XXI. 9.

If we farther conſider Men as united in *Societies,* Publick Worſhip will appear neceſſary to *them* in every View: Neceſſary as a *Preſervative* of Thoſe Religious Influences on the Minds of the ſeveral Members, without which [b] *the whole Body cannot be fitly joined together*; and neceſſary as an *Evidence* of *their effectual Working in the Meaſure of every Part,* without which there can be no ſuch Reliance on an equal Circulation of Good Offices, as the Health and *Increaſe of the Body* requires. Where the Members of a Community regularly attend upon the ſtated Offices of Religion, and *walk together in the Houſe of GOD as Friends*; *there* a Foundation is laid for mutual Confidence; *there* the Affairs of the Publick, or the Intercourſe between particular Perſons, may be carried on with Chearfulneſs, becauſe with a reaſonable Security. Whereas, He, who never *appears* to *worſhip* GOD, cannot be known, cannot well be preſumed, to *fear* Him; and is on that Account incapable of giving either the whole Society or any of his Fellow-Members the moſt proper Pledges of his Faithfulneſs and Integrity. And, *ſhould* ſuch Examples become *general*, it may be worth conſidering, on what Footing *Social* Commerce could *for any Time* be ſupported; or how, in particular Thoſe *Adminiſtrations of Juſtice* could be carried on with any Propriety, which muſt ever preſuppoſe ſome Tie upon the *Conſciences* of All who give Evidence or Verdict on theſe ſolemn Occaſions.

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[a] Luke XVIII. 1, 4. [b] Eph. IV. 16.

Add to this, that as long as Divine Providence ſhall be believed to concern Itſelf with Humane Affairs (and ſurely, for the Credit as well as the Comfort of Mankind, *This* will always be believed) ſo long Communities of Men, *as ſuch*, will find perpetual Calls to addreſs the Supreme Being: And theſe, not with regard to their *Secular* Intereſts only, but alſo on Account of many *Spiritual* Bleſſings; which, however They may be thought *merely perſonal*, are certainly of *ſocial* and general *Concern:* Such as, the publick Means of Grace, the Light of God's Truth, the Defence of His Church, &c. And it muſt ever be highly fit and reaſonable, that common

Wants ſhould be jointly made known to our common Father, that common Evils ſhould be jointly deprecated, and common Benefits with united Gratitude acknowledged. Nay even thoſe Good Things which are moſt ſpiritual and moſt ſtrictly perſonal; ſuch as, the Pardon of Sins paſt, the Supply of Strength againſt Temptations for the future; — *Theſe* too may ſurely be, in *general* Terms at leaſt, jointly implored; inaſmuch as *every* Worſhipper is equally concerned to obtain them. Eſpecially if it ſhall appear, that the Fervency of our Prayers for Theſe and all other Bleſſings may be greatly aſſiſted, and our Hopes of their Succeſs proportionably encreaſed, by *joining* our Petitions with thoſe of our Brethren. Which Conſideration directly leads me to illuſtrate,

3. In the *Third* Place, The Reaſonableneſs, Advantages, and Importance, of frequenting Publick and Social Worſhip in regard to the *particular Worſhippers* themſelves.

And here, I am ſenſible, many worthy Perſons may find their own *Attention* more *fixed*, perhaps alſo their *Devotion* at certain Seaſons more *fervent*, in their *ſecret* Addreſſes to the Divine Being, than they can always perceive in more publick Places. When the Objects of Senſe are in great Meaſure ſhut out, contemplative Perſons will probably *often feel* themſelves not only leſs liable to Wanderings and *Diſſipations* of Thought, but alſo more at Liberty to be *explicite* and *particular* in confeſſing their Sins, laying open their Wants, and *pouring out their Hearts* before GOD, than They could otherwiſe be. There is, in Truth, no Occaſion for *comparing* Publick and Private Worſhip to the *Diminution* of Either: *Each* of theſe may be allowed to have *its reſpective* Advantages; Each is excellent, indeed neceſſary, *in its Order* and Seaſon. Let me not, then, be underſtood to recommend the Worſhip of the Temple in *Oppoſition to* that of the Cloſet, but in *Conjunction with* it. *This* latter *ought* All of us *to perform, but None* of us *to leave the other undone*.

For, beſides what hath already been obſerved of the Condition and Capacities of the *Generality* of Mankind; even the moſt *improved Underſtandings* will find Cauſe to beware, leſt a Worſhip *entirely mental*, and *abſtracted* from every *ſocial* Regard, ſhould degenerate into *Pride* and Uncharitableneſs, or *refine* itſelf into Ecſtaſy and *Enthuſiaſm*. The Wiſe Author of our Nature hath *made* us *ſo-*

ciable, and in part *corporeal*, Beings; and our very Addreſſes to Himſelf will generally ſuffer by all Attempts to *diveſt* ourſelves *wholly* of *either* of Thoſe Characters. Nay I would farther appeal to all Perſons accuſtomed to Religious Exerciſes, Whether their pious Affections have not many Times received conſiderable *Acceſſions* of Warmth, their Zeal of Vigour, and every ſpiritual Capacity of Improvement and Enlargement, from *joining* in the Devotions of a numerous yet well conducted Aſſembly. The Heart that can remain wholly untouched *here*, muſt not charge its Coldneſs to the Company It is in; and can indeed ſcarce be rightly *qualified* for the Service of Almighty God, either in Publick or in Private.

To ſpeak freely, there is great Reaſon to fear, that Thoſe Perſons, who *talk mightily* of Private Devotion, at the ſame Time that they cauſeleſly neglect to give their Attendance upon Publick Worſhip, muſt either *intend* to deceive Others, or will e're long very fatally *deceive their own Hearts.* Whilſt we carry theſe Bodies about us, eſpecially if *the Cares of this Life* have any conſiderable Hold upon us, it is of the higheſt Importance towards ſecuring any uſeful *Remembrance of our Creator*,

tor, that Time and Place ſhould be *fixed* for breaking off our Commerce with ſecular Concerns, and ſolemnly entering into His more immediate Preſence. Men may ſet themſelves Rules for this Purpoſe; which, when duly obſerved, are (no doubt) highly praiſeworthy. But, I am afraid, Rules known only to God and Mens own Hearts, are apt to be too eaſily *diſpenſed with*. Seldom will be wanting Pleas of *extraordinary* Buſineſs, or of otherwiſe commendable Application to Study and Meditation, to induce them *for once* to make free with a Rule of their own preſcribing. And, whilſt every ſuch Breach makes Way for ſucceeding ones; from learning to neglect the uſual Calls to *publick* Worſhip, Men are in great Danger of growing unconcerned, firſt for whole Days, and then for Weeks together, about any Sort of Religious Intercourſe with their Maker; 'till at length they are ſunk into a Kind of *Heathenіſm*, and even become almoſt, as to any good Effect, *without GOD in the World!*

II. However, if after all any One ſhould be conſcious, or ſhould flatter himſelf he is conſcious, that *his own* Devotion doth not flag, nor are the ſtated Returns of it intermitted;

mitted, though confined to his Cloſet: I muſt *now proceed* to add to the foregoing Conſiderations this farther moſt important one: namely, " That *Publick Worſhip*, in Religious Aſſemblies, and in Places dedicated to ſacred Purpoſes, *is* indeed *the Ordinance of GOD* Himſelf; " that It hath the *Promiſe* of His more eſpecially favourable Acceptance and Regard; and " that It cannot therefore be omitted, *wilfully* and *for any Time* omitted, without a very blameable *Neglect* of Divine Authority, and of the ſpiritual Intereſts of our own *immortal* Souls.

For the Proof of this I may refer to the whole Tenor of the inſpired Writings.—Upon looking into Theſe, one of the [a] firſt Things we meet with, after the Increaſe of the human Species, is the Worſhip of God by *Oblations* and *Sacrifices*. After this we find the [b] *Patriarchs*, on every extraordinary Occaſion, *erecting Altars* or *Pillars*, or *planting Groves*; that is, ſetting apart Places for ſolemn Services, and for *Calling on the Name of the LORD, the Everlaſting GOD*. As we go on in the *ſacred Hiſtory*, we cannot miſs of obſerving, what particular Care was taken of every Thing *related* to God's Service among that *peculiar People,* which He *choſe out of all the Families of the Earth to place His Name there:* What Variety and even Profuſion of Expence and Skill was employed about the *Ark* and the *Tabernacle,* long before the Worſhippers themſelves had any ſettled Habitation: How carefully and minutely the Courſes of the *Prieſts* and *Levites* were regulated: How exactly their Method and Times of Attendance preſcribed: How remarkably their Obſervance of the Duty encouraged by that memorable Declaration of God Himſelf —[a] " *In all Places where I record my Name I will come unto Thee, and I will bleſs Thee.*

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[a] Gen. IV. 3, 4, 5.

[b] See particularly Gen. VIII. 20. — XII. 7, 8. — XIII. 18. — XXI. 33, &c.

Look we forward to the Settlement of the *Jewiſh* Polity under the Government of *Kings?* We find the *Care* of God's Publick Worſhip making up one of the diſtinguiſhing Ingredients in the Characters of their *Good* Princes; and, on the other Hand, the *Neglect* or *Perverſion* of it always ſtigmatizing their *Bad* ones. The *former* we have remarkably exemplified in the Accounts of *Solomon* (in the proſperous Part of His Reign) of *Jehoſhaphat,* of *Hezekiah,* and *Joſiah.* But I need not enlarge upon Matters ſo well known. Only it may deſerve a particular Obſervation, that King *David* received a [a] *ſpecial Meſſage* from God, expreſly approving his *Intention only* of building an Houſe, for the ſolemn Performance of Divine Worſhip: *Whereas it was in Thine Heart to build an Houſe unto my Name, Thou didſt well that it was in Thine Heart!*— How doth this excellent Prince, tenderly ſolicitous for the Welfare of his People, and ſenſible how much their Proſperity muſt ever depend on the regular Celebration of ſacred Offices; how doth he *exult* upon diſcovering in *them* an Inclination ſo like *his own?* [b] *I was glad when they ſaid unto me, "We will go into the Houſe of the LORD."* And, as to himſelf, with what holy Ardor doth he expreſs his Affection for God's Publick Service! [c] *O how amiable are Thy Dwellings, Thou LORD of Hoſts! My Soul hath a Deſire and Longing to enter into the Courts of the LORD: my Heart and my Fleſh cry out for the Living GOD!* And again; [d] *My Soul is athirſt for GOD, yea even for the Living GOD! When ſhall I come to appear before the Preſence of GOD!*—Let us remember, that the Perſon, whoſe devout Breathings theſe were, had a very peculiar [a] *Teſtimony* in his Favour from GOD Himſelf: Of which, however, he never approved himſelf more worthy, than when his *Heart* was thus *fixed* on joining in the ſacred Services in his own Perſon, and on providing that they might be with Decency and Beauty ſolemnized by others.

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[a] Exod. XX. 24.

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[a] Comp. 2 Sam. VII. 5, &c. with 1 Kin. VIII. 18. [b] Pſal. CXXII. [c] — LXXXIV. 1, 2. [d] — XLII. 2.

Our Enquiries, if carried on through the *Prophetick* Ages, would diſcover to us the ſame Zeal for GOD's Publick Worſhip in the moſt eminent *Men*, which hath appeared in the moſt glorious of their *Princes*. But the Time would fail me to enumerate particular Inſtances. Let it ſuffice to obſerve, that, throughout the *Jewiſh* Hiſtory, we find a *Love* for GOD's *Publick Worſhip* flouriſhing, decaying, and reviving, in conjunction with *Publick Spirit* and every other great and noble Qualification; and *Publick Credit* and Proſperity with a very wonderful Exactneſs correſponding to *Both*.

Nor can the Introduction of *CHRIST's Religion* into the World be allowed to have brought in with it any ſuch *entire* Change in this Matter, as Some contend for. Our Bleſſed LORD, it is true, hath declared, that, as

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[a] Comp. 1 Sam. XIII. 14, &c. with Acts XIII. 22.

GOD

[a] *GOD is a Spirit, they that worſhip Him muſt worſhip Him in Spirit and in Truth:* And, that *neither at the Temple nor yet at Jeruſalem* ſhould *Men worſhip the Father.* But theſe Declarations, far from condemning ſocial Worſhip, only explain the *unconfined Extent* of it as to Places and Countries under the Goſpel-Diſpenſation, and ſhew what ſhould in every Place and Country be accounted its *principal Requiſite*, the Devotion of the *Heart.*—That our Lord was very far from intending to diſcourage the *joint* Addreſſes of His Followers, appears from His own *Promiſe*, that [b] *where Two or Three ſhould be gathered together to aſk any Thing in His Name, there would He be in the midſt of them*; Nay, from the [c] *Form of Prayer*, which Himſelf preſcribed: And that He was as far from intending to diſcourage their Offering up theſe joint Addreſſes in *Places dedicated* to Religious Purpoſes, is as plain from His own [d] *Example* in attending the Temple-Service, and from that *Zeal* and Indignation with which He *chaſtiſed the Prophaners* of it. When [e] *certain Elders of the* Jews *beſought Him inſtantly* in behalf of the *Good Centurion*, they expreſs their Senſe of

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[a] Joh. IV. 23, 24. [b] Matt. XVIII. 19, 20. [c] —— VI. 9, &c. [d] Joh. II. 13, 14, 15. [e] Luke VII. 4, 5.

his *Worthineſs* of Favour in theſe remarkable Words, "*He loveth our Nation, and hath built us a Synagogue:*" And from the Regard our Lord paid to ſuch a Recommendation, His own Approbation of *Synagogues* or Churches among *Chriſtians*, when their Circumſtances ſhould provide them any ſuch ſacred Edifices, may be fairly inferred. But, if *His* Intention in theſe reſpects were leſs clear than it is; we find, His Diſciples and firſt Followers (the beſt Interpreters of His Will, eſpecially after the Holy *Spirit had led them into all Truth)* did not think themſelves too ſpiritual, or poſſeſſed of too high Attainments, for joining with their Converts [a] *in Doctrine and Fellowſhip, and in Breaking of Bread and in Prayers.* Accordingly (not to multiply Inſtances in a Caſe ſo clear) we find St. *Paul* in particular employing large Portions of ſome of His [b] *Epiſtles* in Directions for the Celebration of Religious Worſhip, and in Cautions againſt *Abuſes* or *Diſorders* in it. And how aſſiduous the *Primitive Chriſtians* were in *their* Attendance on this great Duty, not only the Accounts of their Hiſtorians and Apologiſts, but the Reports of their Perſecutors, amply teſtify.

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[a] Acts II. 42.

[b] 1 Cor. XI. 14, &c. and 1 Tim. II. 12, &c.

To the *Reaſons* before ſuggeſted for *ſocial* Worſhip relating to us *as Men*, others might be added recommending it to us *as Chriſtians*. In particular with regard to publick Bleſſings, *ſpiritual* ones eſpecially, we may humbly hope our Addreſſes to our *Saviour*, or to the *Father in His Name*, will aſcend with peculiar Efficacy, when they are the *united* Addreſſes of that [a] *Body, of which He is the Head* --- of that [b] *Church, which He purchaſed with His own Blood*. Indeed ſome of the moſt *ſolemn* Acts of that Worſhip, which our Divine *Founder* hath inſtituted, can only be performed *in Communion* with our Fellow-Chriſtians. To which let me juſt add, that a *Reliſh* for ſuch publick Acts of joint Adoration ſeems to be one of the moſt *ſuitable Qualifications*, one of the moſt *excellent Preparatives*, for bearing a Part with *the Spirits of Juſt Men made perfect*: Of which Society, as far as we have any Notices of its Nature or Employments, a numerous Congregation of devout Believers, lifting up their united Voices and en-raptured Hearts to the adorable *Object of Chriſtian Worſhip*, preſents to our View one of the moſt lively Reſemblances that this World affords.

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[a] Eph. IV. 15, 16. [b] Acts XX. 28.

In a Word; To *abſent* ourſelves cauſeleſly from the Publick Worſhip of our *Creator* and *Redeemer*, is to cut ourſelves off from ſome at leaſt of the moſt *comfortable Privileges* of the Goſpel; and, if it do not *preſuppoſe* us Apoſtates from our Holy Religion itſelf, will however, in all Probability, ſoon deliver us over to that truly dreadful State. This is ſtrongly intimated by the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*; with whoſe remarkable Words I conclude this Head. [a] " *Let us hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without Wavering --- Not forſaking the Aſſembling of ourſelves together, as the Manner of ſome is, but exhorting one another,*

III. And now; If the Reaſonableneſs, Advantages, and Neceſſity of a conſtant Attendance on Publick Worſhip be ſo apparent, from Conſiderations of *Civil Utility* as well as *Natural Obligation* and *Chriſtian Duty*; What remains, but that All of us here preſent, as We would approve ourſelves not only *Servants of GOD* and *Diſciples of CHRIST*, but *Friends to the Community* in which we live, ſhould earneſtly endeavour, *firſt* by our own *Examples*, and *then* by ſuch Influence and *Authority* as may be within our Power, to recommend and enforce the *univerſal Performance* of it.

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[a] Heb. X. 24, 25.

The Degeneracy of the Times, and the Frequency of Villainies of the moſt alarming Kinds, among the lower People in particular, have of late been ſeverely felt and loudly complained of; and various Schemes have been propoſed for the Remedy of theſe growing and almoſt inſupportable Evils: Which Schemes, as far as they are honeſtly intended, every Friend to the Publick will *accept with Thankfulneſs*; and to which, as far as they are wiſely calculated, every Good Man will *wiſh Succeſs*; And this Succeſs we may rationally *hope* for, in *proportion* as ſuch Schemes are *ſanctified* by the *Worſhip of GOD*, and ſupported by ſuitable Proviſions for diffuſing *His Fear* throughout the various Subordinations of the Community. But, after all, You will permit me to ſuggeſt, what (I preſume) Experience will too fully juſtify; "That vain and ineffectual will even the *beſt Proviſions* of this Kind ſtill be found; unleſs ſome *farther Care* be taken to ſecure a *general Attendance* upon them."

I am aware, *This* is a Subject, upon which the Jealouſies of Men, in an Age of Freedom and Refinement, are exceedingly apt to be alarmed. In the Caſe of Religious Worſhip, any Thing like Inforcement or Authority will by Some be repreſented, as a *dangerous Infringement* of that *Liberty* to which all Men have a Right in theſe Matters; or however by Others, as a *fruitleſs Expedient* to implant in the Heart that *Principle*, which ought to proceed *wholly* from ſome better Cauſe.--Give me Leave to add a few Words, by Way of Guarding againſt Prejudices from *Either* of theſe Exceptions.

With regard to the *Firſt*, then, it may deſerve to be conſidered, What that *Liberty* means, for which Men are ſo jealous in the Caſe before us: Not, I hope, a *Freedom* from *all Obligation* to the Worſhip of God, in *any* Society, or under *any viſible* Form whatſoever; but a *Freedom* from *Conſtraint* to worſhip Him in *ſuch* a Society, or under *ſuch* a Form, as a Man's own Reaſon and *Conſcience* cannot, after due Deliberation, be brought to approve. Between *Theſe* there evidently is, both in the Nature of the Thing and in their Influence upon Civil Society, a *wide Difference*; and between *Theſe* therefore the Wiſdom of our Legiſlature hath made a very *juſt Diſtinction*. --- That *ſome determinate* Scheme or Mode of Worſhip ſhould in every Country be *recommended* by ſpecial Privileges, and ſupported by ſuitable Endowments, hath often been proved to be, not only conſiſtent with all *reaſonable* Liberty, but on many Accounts highly expedient, if not abſolutely neceſſary to preſerve it. And, with regard to *that* Form of Worſhip, the Benefit whereof *this Nation* hath long experienced, I will take Leave to add; (notwithſtanding any ſuppoſed Defects, which have formerly raiſed the Clamour of the Enemies of our Church, and have lately been pointed out minutely enough by Some who ſeem willing to be thought Her Friends;) that it ſtill continues to deſerve, and we truſt will ever continue to enjoy, all That Countenance and Support which the Laws of the Land have for many Years afforded it: At leaſt 'till a *better* ſhall be offered, than hath *yet been* offered, for ſupplying Its Place.--However, ſince Objections have been ſtarted, and Scruples entertained, againſt certain Uſages of our National Church; and, ſince Publick Wiſdom hath declared itſelf *ſo far* ſatisfied with the Security given by thoſe who worſhip God in *other* Congregations, as to exempt *them* from the Penalties that former Laws had impoſed upon them; I would by no Means be underſtood to call for any *Infringement* of this *Indulgence*. But we may be allowed to obſerve, that the Plea of a *conſcientious Diſſent* from our eſtabliſhed Form of Worſhip is not in *Reaſon* extended to a *wilful Abſenting* from *all* Publick Worſhip. And, that it was never *intended* to *protect* any ſuch Practice, appears from the *Statute itſelf*; * which at the ſame Time that it exempts from *Legal* Penalties the Worſhippers of God in ſeparate Congregations, expreſly leaves all others under the *Force* and *Execution* of them, *who come not to ſome Congregation or Aſſembly of Religious Worſhip, allowed or permitted by* the ſaid *Act*.

In ſhort: To require Men to attend upon *ſome* Publick Worſhip, is not to break in upon any *Liberty*, which *conſcientious* Men can well be ſuppoſed to *want*, or which the Laws of This Realm allow. For, unaccountably ſcrupulous indeed would thoſe Conſciences be, which, among the various Kinds permitted in theſe Kingdoms, could find *no Society* of Worſhippers, no Form of Worſhip, pure enough for *them*. And our Laws, we ſee, know no Toleration for a *total* Neglect of Religious Worſhip. *This* the Wiſdom of the Nation conſiders as being virtually a [a] *Denial of the GOD that is above*; as in Conſequence ſubverſive of Order and Government; and, therefore, as *an Iniquity to be puniſhed of the Judge.*

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* See Act of 1 *Will.* and *Mar.* Ch. 18. § 16.

[a] Job XXXI. 28.

But perhaps, if *Authoritative Methods* may, in the Caſe ſuppoſed, appear *legally* defenſible, we ſhall ſtill be called upon to vindicate the *Propriety* or *Efficacy* of them. "Such Methods," it will be ſaid, "can at beſt only affect *external Appearances*; but can never inſpire Men with that *internal Devotion* which, to make it acceptable to God, or productive of Benefit to Society, muſt always be voluntary and *unconſtrained*." In other Words, "By the Uſe of ſuch Methods, You may produce in Men *the Form*, but cannot give them *the Power of Godlineſs*."

Now, it is readily acknowledged, that *ſome Truth* there is in this Exception. Indeed *merely Temporal* Inducements in general ſeem rather adapted, by any *direct* Efficiency, to the Reforming of Men's Manners, than to the *Purifying* of *their Hearts*: And undoubtedly, 'till the Heart is purified, whatever may be the *Behaviour*, the *Man* is not ſuch as he ought to be. But what then? If the moſt *ſalutary Diſcipline*, or the beſt calculated *Penal Sanctions*, can *immediately* reach only the outward Behaviour, and muſt depend even for *This* upon finding ſome proper *Diſpoſitions* in thoſe on whom they are employed; muſt *Places of Education* be wholly laid aſide, and *Courts of Judicature* ſhut up? And muſt all human Proviſions, unleſs found to be *infallible* Remedies and able to do *every Thing*, be preſently diſcarded as *uſeleſs* and good for *Nothing?* Men uſe not in other Caſes to *reaſon* at this Rate. Where much Evil is prevented, ſome Good is allowed to be done. And why ſhould it not be *ſome* Recommendation of Publick Inſtitutions of Religion; if, whilſt an Attendance upon them may leave a few bad Men *Hypocrites*, it will probably hinder *many more* from becoming, what they otherwiſe would almoſt unavoidably become, *abandoned Profligates.*

However, (bleſſed be God) we need not reſt this Matter *here*. After all our Refinements, ſuch is in fact the Conſtitution of human Nature, in the earlier Parts of Life eſpecially, that *long-repeated Acts* of outward Decency ſeldom fail to introduce *Habits* of *real Virtue*; and a *conſtant Attendance* of religious Worſhip, under the ordinary Influences of Divine Grace, is often finally productive of a ſincere and *laſting Devotion*. With great Pleaſure I appeal, for Inſtances of *Both*, to This ancient Seat of *Piety* as well as *Learning:* To which, I hope, it will not be any Diſparagement to allow, that no inconſiderable Number of its *brighteſt Ornaments*, paſt or preſent, may at firſt Setting out have been chiefly determined to that exemplary Conduct in general, and even that regular Attendance upon ſacred Offices in particular, which advanced them to this *Character*, by the Influence of *temporal* Motives; ſuch as, Fear of Cenſure and Diſgrace on one hand, and Hopes of Reputation and Encouragement on the other. And yet moſt certain it is (and may we All be duly ſenſible of it!) that whilſt our Views riſe no higher than *to be ſeen of Men*; and this in order to promote, not GOD's Glory, but our own Fame or Fortunes in the World; our *Hearts are not right*, and our moſt orderly Appearances at the Worſhip of our Maker want *That*, which *alone* can render them well-pleaſing in His Sight. But, muſt we hence conclude, that the ſtated Returns of our Religious Offices, and the Laws by which the Obſervance of them is enforced, are of *no real* Service in the Advancement of *true Piety*? Far otherwiſe. --- *Young Minds* are by this Means *timely habituated* to an awful Deportment towards the Supreme Being: They are *trained* up to a [a] *Love of the Habitation of* GOD's *Houſe, and of the Place where* His *Honour dwelleth*: And (by His Bleſſing) many

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[a] Pſal. XXVI. 8.

Hearts, which at firſt perhaps were touched only by *ſecular* Conſiderations, in Proceſs of Time catch the *Holy Flame:* A Flame which ſhall happily kindle in them a regular Warmth of Devotion, and ſuch as ſhall burn and brighten all their Lives after. This, I doubt not, hath been the Caſe of many Thouſands, who are now praiſing God for thoſe happy Opportunities which they here enjoyed; nay for thoſe very Reſtraints and [a] *Chaſtenings, which for the preſent ſeemed not to be joyous but grievous;* which *nevertheleſs afterwards yielded the peaceable Fruits of Righteouſneſs unto them that were exerciſed thereby.*

And, *could* the like outward Regularity of Worſhip be as ſtrictly required, and as generally ſecured, in private *Families* daily, and in our *Churches* at leaſt on *one* Day in *ſeven*, in other Parts of this Kingdom; I am perſuaded, the Publick would ſoon perceive the agreeable Effects of it, at leaſt on the *riſing Generation*. How far this may be wholly *practicable*, I preſume not to ſay. But ſurely ſomething more might be done, than too often is done, for ſo good a Purpoſe. And if once [b] *Supplications, Prayers, Interceſſions, and Giving of Thanks*, be not only *made* publickly *for all* Orders and Degrees of *Men*, but as univerſally frequented by them; then, and not 'till then, may we hope to *lead quiet and peaceable Lives, in all Godlineſs and Honeſty.*

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[a] Heb. XII. 11. [b] 1 Tim. II. 1, 2.

I have now gone through the Particulars at firſt propoſed. But the Exception juſt conſidered ſuggeſts to us one very important, tho' plain, Truth, which I would willingly leave upon all our Minds in Concluſion of the preſent Subject; namely, "That a *Good Life,* as it is the *beſt Preparative* for Religious Worſhip, ſo is it a *Qualification* indiſpenſably *neceſſary* to render our moſt punctual Performances a reaſonable or an *acceptable Service.*"

[a] *The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the LORD.* Be our Approaches to the *Temple,* and even to the *Altar,* never ſo conſtant, and our Minds worked up to a Pitch of Devotion never ſo ſeemingly regular; yet we may aſſure ourſelves, Nothing of this Kind will ever be admitted, either as an Equivalent for a virtuous Life, or as an Atonement for a vicious one: [b] *If the* prevailing *Inclination of our Hearts be to Wickedneſs, the LORD will not hear us.* [c] *We know* (ſaid the Blind Man, to whom our Saviour gave Sight) *we know,* it is one of the cleareſt Notions we have concerning the Divine Proceedings, *that GOD*

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a Prov. XV. 8. b Pſal. LXVI. 8. c Joh. IX. 31.

heareth not Sinners: *But, if any Man be at once a Worſhipper of Him* and in the general Tenor of Life *doeth His Will, him He heareth.*--Let us then [a] *lift up holy Hands*, and [b] *offer unto the LORD our Offerings in Righteouſneſs.* To the Piety of our Devotions let us add Purity of Life, and Uprightneſs of Converſation. --- So ſhall our Prayers and Praiſes come up with Acceptance before God; and from thus *Fearing and Reverencing* Him *in the Aſſembly of the Saints* here on Earth, we ſhall, in His good Time, be tranſlated into [c] *the general Aſſembly and Church of the Firſtborn, that are written in Heaven:* Where, without Diffidence or Miſgivings, without Wanderings or Diſtractions, without Wearineſs or Pain, we ſhall praiſe and adore [d] *HIM that ſitteth on the Throne, and the LAMB, for Ever and Ever!*

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a 1 Tim. II. 8. b Mal. III. 3. c Heb. XII. 23.
d Rev. V. 13.

A

SERMON

Preached before the

MAYOR AND CORPORATION,

AT

St. *Martin*'s in *OXFORD*,

On *Friday*, *February* 6. 1756.

Being the Day appointed to be kept as a FAST, on Account of the preſent Situation of Publick Affairs, and particularly on Occaſion of the late EARTHQUAKES at *Liſbon* and other Places.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Aſſiſtants of the City.

The THIRD EDITION.

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SERMON
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On Friday, February 6. 1756.

Being the Day appointed to be kept as a FAST, on Account of the preſent Situation of Publick Affairs, and particularly on Occaſion of the late EARTHQUAKES at Liſbon and other Places.

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P

ISAIAH XXVI. 9.

—— *When thy Judgments* are *in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteouſneſs.*

As it is a ſtanding Evidence of Man's *Natural* Imperfection, that ſome Degree of Pain is often wanted to heighten his Reliſh of Pleaſure; ſo is it an equally mortifying Proof of his *Moral* Degeneracy, that Suffering is no leſs neceſſary to rectify his Temper, and improve his Virtues. If *in the Day of Proſperity* we can *be joyful*; yet ſuch Rejoicing is ſeldom either ſo ſincere or ſo well conducted, as when *the Day of Adverſity* hath firſt made us *conſider*. And accordingly, God *hath*, in His Dealings with Mankind, *ſet the one over againſt the other*; *to the End*, that ſuch Perſons or Nations as *will not behold the Majeſty* *of the* LORD *when Favour is ſhewed to them,* may however, *when His Judgments are in the Earth,* be better diſpoſed to *learn Righteouſneſs.*

How much *the Inhabitants of* this Part of *the World* are concerned to make good the Obſervation in my Text, we have now a fit Occaſion to conſider. -- For ſeveral Years together were the Treaſures of this Nation drained from it, and its Blood ſpilt in foreign Lands, in the Courſe of a tedious and hazardous, often unſucceſsful, and always conſuming, *War:* The Calamities whereof were, in a memorable Period of it, ſeverely felt in *one* Part of this Iſland, and almoſt brought home to our own Doors in the *other*. When we were ſcarcely reſcued from the Dread of an *inteſtine* War, and whilſt we yet laboured under the Burden of a *foreign* one; it pleaſed the Almighty to ſend among us a *Plague* of another Nature, very grievous to many Parts of our Land, and in ſome meaſure to the Whole; by deſtroying the *Cattle,* and waſting the Subſtance, of Numbers of its moſt induſtrious and uſeful Inhabitants. And, if our *Colonies* be entitled to our warmeſt *Wiſhes for their Proſperity*; as ſurely they are, at once for their Services to our Mother Country, and *for our Brethren and Companions' ſakes,* who reſide in or are cloſely connected with them: *Theſe* alſo have of late been cruelly infeſted by the incroaching Spirit of Thoſe around them, now at leaſt avowedly ſupported by our powerful Neighbours; in the Iſſue of whoſe Attempts, however remote in their Beginnings, no one can foreſee, how deeply not only our Commercial Affairs, but every Thing elſe that is dear to us in This World (our KING and our COUNTRY, our LIBERTIES and our HOLY RELIGION,) may be involved. Yet, as if theſe Intimations of Divine Diſpleaſure were not enough to admoniſh us, We are, now laſt of all, awakened by *Warnings* of a peculiar Kind, and ſuch as are alarming beyond all the others; as being more ſudden and extenſive in their Effects, and leſs capable of being foreſeen, prevented, reſiſted, or evaded. You will eaſily underſtand me to mean thoſe amazing *Agitations* both of *Land* and *Water*, ſome Strokes whereof have lately been felt in our own Borders: but by the Violence of which in other Regions the Lives of many Thouſands, ſome of them our Country-men, have been as in a Moment deſtroyed, and the Fortunes of far greater Numbers irrecoverably ruined. There is ſomething wonderfully affecting in the Deſcriptions of ſingle Earthquakes, even in remote Ages or Countries of the World. But, when ſuch aſtoniſhing Concuſſions appear in our own Times, and in Countries wherewith we have particular Connections; when they produce the moſt tragical Effects, not tranſiently or in ſome one Place only, but in many Parts of the habitable World nearly about the ſame Time, and in ſome often repeated for Weeks together: Such uncommon Occurrences call for a more than ordinary Attention. *If the Foundations be deſtroyed, what can the Righteous do?* If the whole Globe of Earth and Water be, as it were, in Couvulſions under us, whither can we flee for Support? Whither, but to HIM, *who* firſt *ſtretched out*, and who alone can ſuſtain, *the Earth above the Waters*: Adoring His Goodneſs for having ſpared us until now: Imploring the Continuance of His gracious Protection: Endeavouring to avert His Judgments from our Country by contributing all we can to its Reformation: And each of us, in View of his own moſt laſting Intereſts, aſking himſelf, in the Words of the [a] *Keeper of the Priſon, awakened* by a like Event, "*What muſt I do to be ſaved?*"

Such may well be ſuppoſed to be the Temper of a Nation not wholly loſt to all Senſe of a ſuper-intending Providence. And ſuch our Superiours (we hope, juſtly) ſuppoſe to be the Temper of this Nation, when They now call upon us, to [a] *turn to the* LORD *with all our Hearts, with Faſting, and with Weeping, and with Mourning.* Of which ſeaſonable Appointment, I truſt, we may in ſome Meaſure anſwer the pious Intention, by conſidering theſe Words, -- *When thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteouſneſs.*

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[a] Acts XVI. 26, 30

They are Part of a *Song* or ſacred Hymn addreſſed to GOD by the *Jewiſh* Church in the Days of *Iſaiah.* It would carry us too far from our preſent Buſineſs, ſhould I attempt to explain at large the Occaſion and Import of the Whole, or even to illuſtrate the Connection of my Text with what goes before, and what follows, in it. Let me only obſerve, that the Word rendered "*Judgments*" is well known in many other Places to ſignify thoſe *Statutes, adjudged Caſes,* or *Laws,* of which GOD requires Man's Obſervance. And, according to this Acceptation, the *Evangelical* Prophet might, perhaps not unfitly, be here conſidered as foretelling the great Advantage in point of *Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs,* which *the Inhabitants of the*

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[a] Joel II. 12.

World in general would enjoy, in the Times of the *Goſpel,* by that more extenſive *Knowledge of* God's *Laws* which would then be imparted to them. But, however this be, I chooſe, with the Generality of Interpreters, (eſpecially on the preſent Occaſion) to underſtand by God's *Judgments* any *ſignal or uncommon Manifeſtations of His Power,* either in the *mercifully corrective* or in the *juſtly vindictive* Way: Between which ſince we can rarely diſtinguiſh with Certainty in particular Inſtances, there is the leſs Need to detain You with any Accuracy of Diſtinction in a general Conſideration of them. And, if by *Righteouſneſs* we underſtand, not barely Juſtice, or Exactneſs of Behaviour towards our Fellow-Members in Society, but Rectitude of Temper upon the whole, and Regularity of Conduct in every Relation, towards God and Ourſelves as well as Others with whom We have any Intercourſe; my Text will furniſh us with a Doctrine, important at all Times, but at preſent particularly worthy of Attention: Namely, "That the Providential Deſign and proper Effect of Divine Interpoſitions of the *Judicial* Kind is, to make the Sufferers, if They have Time allowed for it, but eſpecially the Obſervers, wiſer and better; by inſtructing them in, and exciting them to, the Practice of Virtue and Piety and univerſal *Righteouſneſs*."

Which great Truth I ſhall accordingly endeavour to illuſtrate and apply in the plaineſt Method I can; by pointing out ſome of thoſe *inſtructive Leſſons*, which *Divine Judgments* hold forth to Mankind: Whether they be of a more *General* and *Publick* Nature, or of a more *Particular* and *Perſonal* Uſe and Influence.

I. I begin with ſuch Obſervations as are of a more *General* and *Publick* Kind: More *General*, in regard to thoſe *Judgments* that ſuggeſt them; and more *Publick*, in regard to the *Communities* concerned to *learn* and apply them.

1. And here, the *Firſt* Conſideration which offers itſelf is, That we ſhould look up to Almighty God as the *primary* Author and *ſupreme* Conductor of ſuch Events; whatever may ſeem the *ſubordinate* Cauſe of them, always acknowledging them to be His *Judgments*.

Thus much is *ſuppoſed* in my Text, and ſhould not need to be illuſtrated to a *Chriſtian* Audience, were it not of too great Importance upon the preſent Subject to be wholly omitted. It is indeed the Foundation, if not of all the *Moral* Uſes, at leaſt of all the *Religious* Inſtructions, which calamitous Events, either felt or obſerved, at preſent intimate to us. Were *Affliction* to be conſidered merely as *coming forth of the Duſt*, and *Trouble* as *ſpringing out of the Ground*, without any higher Origin, any wiſer Direction; they would leave our Condition ſtill more uncomfortable than it is, whilſt we ſhould loſe much of that Aſſiſtance they now give Us towards the Improvement of our Tempers. And, in fact, we uſually find thoſe Perſons who *have not* GOD *in all their Thoughts*, equally impatient under their own Sufferings and unimproved by thoſe of other Men; whilſt, in their Speculations upon ſuch Evils as proceed from human Actions, they riſe no higher than to the ordinary Workings of human Paſſions; and treat it as a Weakneſs to look beyond Material Cauſes for the Riſe of ſuch Calamities as have mere Matter for their immediate Inſtrument. Whereas Affliction is then only fitted to have its proper Efficacy, when [a] *all that ſee it ſhall ſay*, "*This hath* GOD *done*;" and when *They* who feel the Smart of it ſhall *perceive that it is His Work*.

[a] Pſal. LXIV. 9.

And thus it is that both Reaſon and Revelation teach us to conſider all Occurrences of this Kind; I might ſay, of every Kind: For tho' the Great Governour of the Univerſe ordinarily ſupports both *Material* and *Moral* Agents in their reſpective Operations, according to *ſtated Laws*; yet thoſe Laws were originally framed by His Appointment, and are continually ſubject to His Direction. He it was, who firſt [a] *meaſured the Waters in the Hollow of His Hand, and meted out the Heaven with a Span, and comprehended the Duſt of the Earth in a Meaſure, and weighed the Mountains in Scales and the Hills in a Balance.* And if at any Time this regular Order, this ſtupendous Arrangement of Things is, to the Deſtruction of many and the Aſtoniſhment of all, diſturbed; we may be ſure, Nothing of this Kind can happen without His Concurrence or Permiſſion, who firſt adjuſted it. [b] *Fire and Vapour and ſtormy Wind*, whether within the Bowels of the Earth, or upon the Surface of it; whether producing Effects common and unheeded, or unuſual and ſurprizing; may be acting (as far as They can be ſaid to act) according to their Natures; but are however all the While executing their Maker's Orders, and *fulfilling*

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[a] Iſ. XL. 12. [b] Pſal. CXLVIII. 8.

His Word. So again, rapacious Men and ſavage Nations, in their Incroachments, Depredations, and Barbarities, may ſeem only gratifying their own avaritious and cruel Diſpoſitions; and are really provoking a righteous and holy God by making ſo perverſe an Uſe of the Faculties He gives them: Yet, notwithſtanding this, they both hold and exert theſe Faculties in a *perpetual* Dependence upon Him. Without His Leave the moſt powerful, the moſt enraged, Enemy [a] *ſhall not come into* any *City* or Country, *nor ſhoot an Arrow there, nor come before it with Shields, nor caſt a Bank againſt it.* -- In ſhort, He who firſt impreſſed upon Natural Cauſes all their Tendencies, and granted to Moral Agents all their Powers, muſt every Moment ſupport, and can at Pleaſure controll, the moſt miſchievous of Both; and muſt therefore be underſtood as ſuperintending all thoſe Evils, which either ſingle Men or Nations at any Time ſuffer from the one or the other.

The Truth is, the Almighty intends and expects *when His Hand is lifted up*, that His Rational Creatures ſhould *ſee* and ſtand in Awe of It. Not that Divine Providence is leſs really concerned in the ordinary Courſe of Things, than in ſuch ſeeming Deviations from it. [a] *The Heavens declare the Glory of* God, *and the Firmament ſheweth His Handy-Work: Day unto Day uttereth Speech, and Night unto Night ſheweth Knowledge.* The ſtated Revolutions of the heavenly Bodies, the regular Returns of *fruitful Seaſons*, and the daily Appearances that ſucceed each other in the moſt uniform Order, are (no doubt) continually *bearing Witneſs* to God's Wiſdom and Goodneſs, and *teaching* all, who are willing to attend to them, our entire Dependence upon His Power and Providence. But ſtill, thoſe Interpoſitions that ſeem to us extraordinary, though they may not require any *Exertion* of Power *more difficult* to *Him*, yet bring with them a *Diſplay* of it *more awakening* to *us*. If a [b] *ſtrong Wind rend the Rocks, and after the Wind an Earthquake, and after the Earthquake a Fire*; Jehovah is *not* indeed more eſſentially preſent in any or all of Theſe, but His Operation is more awfully diſtinguiſhable, than in *the ſtill ſmall Voice* of the Courſe of Nature. The Inſtructions ſuggeſted by This latter, being common and familiar, are by the thoughtleſs overlooked, or by the vicious eluded. *An unwiſe Man doth not well conſider this, and a Fool* or irreligious Perſon *doth not underſtand it*. He collects (it may be) from what himſelf ſees, compared with what he has heard, that, whilſt [a] *one Generation paſſeth away and another cometh, the Earth abideth for ever:* And if he admits of *any* Creation or Beginning of this viſible World, he underſtands, however, that [b] *ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, all Things,* in the main, *continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation*; and therefore he ſees no Occaſion for the vulgar Notion of a ſuperintending Providence. But, *if the* LORD *make a new Thing: if the Earth open her Mouth,* and *the Depths alſo be troubled,* both of them in ſo unuſual a Manner as to threaten to return to their primitive Confuſion: Such Manifeſtations of the Almighty's Power, in Ways to us ſtrange and aſtoniſhing, though equally eaſy to Him, effectually confute, and are moſt likely to ſilence, *the great ſwelling Words of* human *Vanity*. The Politician finding his Refinements unaccountably ſuperſeded, and the Philoſopher all his Powers of Imitation and Skill in Solution far outdone, muſt now if ever agree in crying out, with the [c] *Magicians of Egypt,* "*This is the Finger of* GOD!" [d] *When* GOD thus *ariſeth to Judgment, the Fierceneſs of Man ſhall turn*

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[a] Iſ. XXXVII. 33.

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[a] Pſal. XIX. 1, 2.

[b] Kings XIX. 11, 12.

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[a] Eccl. I. 4. [b] 2 Pet. III. 4. [c] Exod. VIII. 18, 19.
[d] Pſal. LXXVI. 10, 11.

to His Praiſe: He *ſhall reſtrain* or overawe *the Spirit of Princes; and is wonderful among the Kings of the Earth!*

2. But our Reflections muſt not ſtop here. When the God of Nature appears to *depart* from His *uſual* Methods of conducting it, He hath, we may conclude, ſuch *Reaſons* for ſo doing as We are concerned to enquire into with Modeſty, and with ſeriouſneſs to *lay to Heart*.

God is, no doubt, the *abſolute Lord* and Proprietor of the Univerſe: But He is alſo the *wiſe* and good *Governour* of it. And, however the Diſplay of His adoreable Majeſty may be *one* Great End of His occaſional Interpoſitions, we muſt not imagine This to be the *only* or the ultimate End of them, eſpecially when employed in producing the Miſery, and even Deſtruction, of Numbers of His principal Creatures in this lower World. [a] *He doth not afflict willingly, or* without Reaſon *grieve the Children of Men.* When therefore, beſide thoſe Diſtreſſes or Diſeaſes which, by His wiſe Appointment, uſually attend upon Folly and Vice as their Natural Conſequences, He *makes bare His Arm* in ſome unuſual Infliction; when He delivers up any Country to the Outrages of violent Men: or when He ſends into a Land [a] *His great Army, the Locuſt and the Caterpillar*, cauſing ſome noxious Inſect or *noiſome Beaſt to paſs through* it; or, in ſhort, when He ſweeps away Thouſands at once by any of thoſe Inſtruments, which are always ready to execute His Commands: Men converſant in the Operations of Natural Cauſes may, it is true, commendably and uſefully employ their Sagacity in tracing out the *immediate* Occaſions of ſuch Events, and their Skill in providing (as far as human Skill can provide) ſeaſonable Remedies. But then, *whoſo is wiſe will* alſo, with a yet farther View, *ponder Theſe Things*; with all Humility reflecting, on what Errand ſuch afflictive Diſpenſations may be ſuppoſed to be ſent, and what Inſtructions *the* God *of Mercy* may be preſumed to offer by entering upon This [b] *His ſtrange Work.*

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[a] Lam. III. 33.

Now the moſt obvious Errands, upon which Providence may be underſtood to ſend among Men the Evil they ſuffer, are their Admonition and Correction, or their Puniſhment for the Evil they have done. Something of this laſt ſeems implied in the very Notion of *Judgments*. And we are by Scripture as well as Reaſon warranted in ſuppoſing, not only that Sin *was* the *original* Cauſe of Suffering among Mankind, but that it ſtill is, eſpecially in the Caſe of Nations *as ſuch*, the *meritorious* Cauſe of particular Calamities. But then, in the Application of ſuch general Principles to ſingle Inſtances, it will always become Us to proceed with Caution and to pronounce with Reverence: Well knowing, *how unſearchable* God's *Judgments are, and His Ways paſt finding out*. We ſhall be moſt liable to Miſtakes about the ſpecial Deſignation of *particular* Judgments againſt *particular* Sins; but we may eaſily miſtake alſo in our Eſtimation *from thence* of the Characters of Perſons or Nations affected by them. We may judge too ſeverely even in *our own* Caſe; if, upon every Affliction to ourſelves or our Country, we preſently conclude, that we are *caſt off by* God, and that *He hath forgotten to be gracious* to us. But we ſhall be more in Danger of erring in our Deciſions concerning *others*; by ſuppoſing their Sufferings to bear any *exact Proportion* to their *Moral* Deſervings; eſpecially if, upon comparing their apparently calamitous Condition with our own preſent Indemnity, we form a Compariſon of our reſpective Demerits, and our Situations upon the Whole in regard to the Favour or Diſpleaſure of Almighty God.

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[a] Joel. II. 25. [b] Iſ. XXVIII. 21.

Yet this is a Miſapplication of Divine Judgments of long ſtanding in the World. We find it remarkably exemplified in the ancient Book of *Job*, and zealouſly defended by Thoſe, who from hence, inſtead of being *friendy Viſitants*, became *miſerable Comforters* to that *perfect and upright*, tho' much afflicted, *Man*. It is indeed a Miſapplication, to which our Self-Love renders us extremely liable. Gladly would we flatter ourſelves upon the Compariſon with our Neighbours: And, when any croſs Accident or ſore Affliction befalls any One, much more any Number, of them, eſpecially if of a Party oppoſite to our own; we not only impute it to ſomething faulty in them, but too often take Occaſion to compliment ourſelves. This however is a Method of Judging evidently erroneous in the Caſe of thoſe Calamities, in which Men of the moſt different Characters appear equally involved; and it is in other Caſes, not only fallacious in itſelf and uncharitable to others, but preſumptuous toward God: It is *intruding into Thoſe Things which we have not ſeen*, and *judging the Servants of another Maſter*. Beſides that We hereby defeat all the good Ends of ſuch Occurrences in regard to ourſelves; affected with publick Judgments juſt as Men are obſerved to be with general Satyrs; Where, whilſt each is employed in remarking how juſtly the Strokes fall upon thoſe about him, each forgets to apply the Correction and the Caution to himſelf; and thus is the Benefit loſt to All.

The Determination of our *Bleſſed* LORD upon this Point, tho' well known, is too remarkable to be here omitted. [a] *There were* (we read) *at* a certain *Seaſon, ſome that told Him of the* Galileans, *whoſe Blood* Pilate *had mingled with their Sacrifices.* The Relaters ſeem to have aſcribed ſuch an extraordinary Manner of Suffering to ſome as extraordinary Degree of Guilt on the Part of the Sufferers. What then ſaith the Anſwer of Wiſdom Itſelf? *Suppoſe Ye, that theſe* Galileans *were Sinners above all the* Galileans, *becauſe they ſuffered ſuch Things? I tell You, Nay.* To this Inſtance of ſuffering from human Cruelty, He Himſelf ſubjoins another, no leſs fatal, from undeſigning Matter. *Or thoſe Eighteen, upon whom the Tower in* Siloam *fell and ſlew them; ſuppoſe Ye, that They were Sinners above all Men that dwelt at* Jeruſalem? *I tell*

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[a] Luke XIII. 1—5.

You, Nay.—The Anſwer, You ſee, is in both Caſes the ſame: However the two Inſtances of Suffering might differ as to their ſubordinate Cauſes, no Queſtion is made but that they were under the Direction of the ſame *Moral* Governour: Nor is it here denied, either that the Sufferers had been Sinners, or that they had ſuffered *for* their Sins. In ſhort, the *Suppoſal* here corrected is *This*; "That They, who had periſhed *muſt* certainly have been *Sinners above All* that had eſcaped —*ſo far* above them, as that theſe Latter had no Need to be in fear of any like Viſitation:" A Suppoſal, falſe in its Principle, and dangerous in its Tendency: Againſt which therefore the merciful Jesus takes Occaſion to guard His Hearers; calling home their Reflections from the ſuppoſed Guilt of Others to the State of their own Tempers and Lives, the Ruin threatening them on that Account, and the only Way by which they could hope to prevent it:—*Except Ye repent, Ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh!*

3. Which brings us directly to the *principal* Improvement we ſhould make of all Publick Judgments; Namely, to take Occaſion from thence to *ſearch and try our own Ways*

and turn to the Lord, in order to avert the like Evils from ourſelves and our Country.

This will be, in the moſt proper Senſe, to *learn Righteouſneſs*, and is an Uſe of ſuch Occurrences, in which we cannot be miſtaken. Would to God, that *We* of this Kingdom had leſs Need to make the Application! If indeed, upon an impartial Scrutiny, We *ſhould* find ourſelves, even comparatively, *without Sin*; we might then have more Leiſure to gratify our Curioſity, and might with more Propriety indulge a cenſorious Humour, in regard to the Moral or Religious State of our Suffering Neighbours. But, alas! we ſhould in ſuch an Imagination greatly deceive ourſelves; nor will the Deluſion be leſs palpable or leſs fatal, ſhould we grow ſecure upon finding ourſelves guiltleſs in ſome Inſtances where They are obnoxious, unleſs we ſtand equally clear in all others of equal Importance.—If, for inſtance, we are not generally chargeable with *Superſtition* (which however may appear in very different Shapes;) we ſhall do well to reflect, whether we are alſo free from *Profaneneſs*. If we are not unreaſonably fond of Pomp, and have even an *Abhorrence of Idolatry*, in Publick Worſhip; let us not preſently conclude ourſelves ſpared, whilſt our Neighbours have been puniſhed, purely on That Account; unleſs we can equally acquit ourſelves and our Country-men of a *ſacrilegious* Miſapplication of God's own holy Day, and a ſcandalous Contempt of His Worſhip in general. If, once more, we ſtand clear of the juſtly heinous Charge of *perſecuting* the faithful Servants of Christ, and *torturing* many ſincere Profeſſors of His Religion: Yet *where is* our *Boaſting*, *ſhould* We be fallen into the oppoſite Extreme of *Caring for none of theſe Things*: *Should* wanton Scoffers, whenſoever They are ſo minded, find an unmoleſted Licence to ſcatter among the Vulgar their poiſonous Notions, thoſe worſt of *Firebrands, Arrows and Death*; ridiculing the moſt ſacred Truths, and reviling (if not *perſecuting)* thoſe that teach them; nay ſometimes even [a] *blaſpheming that worthy Name by which we are called*: Or (as if all this were not ſufficient to *ſubvert whole Houſes*, and to ſet the Body of the People as free from the Checks of Conſcience as poſſible) *ſhould* the firſt Principles of all Religion be openly degraded into ſtated Topicks of [b] *vain Jangling*; by Way of Seaſoning to the low Merriment of *Thoſe*, who, on Subjects of ſuch a Nature at leaſt, can hardly be ſuppoſed to *underſtand either what they ſay or whereof they affirm.* — Surely, a *blind* Zeal for the Religion of CHRIST however miſtaken in ſome Articles of it, or even an intemperate Heat againſt Oppoſers, which can at moſt *kill the Body*, cannot be more provoking to Its Divine Author than ſuch audacious Inſults upon Himſelf, ſuch cruel Neglect of the *Souls for whom He died.* [a] *Hath any Nation* ſo uſed *their Gods, which yet were no Gods?* To introduce *Religion*, and (as far as in them lies) its *adoreable Object*, into ſuch Debates, at ſuch Seaſons, and for ſuch Purpoſes, as thoſe now hinted at, too nearly reſembles the Malice, and exceeds the Impiety, of the *Philiſtines* when they [b] *called for* Sampſon *to make them Sport*, And, what can be ſo reaſonably expected, as that Omnipotence thus affronted ſhould pull down upon the Heads of ſuch Mockers, and (may I not add?) upon the Place that harbours them, *ſwift Deſtruction!*

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[a] Jam. II. 7. [b] 1 Tim. I. 6, 7.

I delight not in purſuing this melancholy Theme of our publick *Impieties* thro' their deſtructive Conſequences upon the *Morals* of the Nation. Otherwiſe, it were but too eaſy to enlarge upon that inſatiable Thirſt after ſenſual Pleaſure, that Luxury and Lewdneſs, which overſpread the Land: That Avarice, Venality, and Want of Publick Spirit, which are complained of in Some; and that Jealouſy, Suſpiciouſneſs, and Want of Candour, in Others: That Eagerneſs for Profit or Power or Pre-eminence, which enflames Men's interfering Purſuits into implacable Enmities: That Prevarication with the moſt ſolemn Stipulations, and Profanation of the moſt ſacred Ordinances, by which (it is to be feared) too Many are firſt tempted to elude the well-intended Laws of their Country, and then harden themſelves in ſuch Violations by charging all the Guilt upon the Legiſlature itſelf: Above all, That notorious Diſregard of Oaths, which renders it impoſſible to ſecure to *All their Dues*, or even to procure ſatisfactory Evidences in Courts of Judicature. — But I forbear. Nor has thus much been ſaid (You will believe) in order to prevent our becoming wiſer from the Sufferings of our Neighbours, or our Guarding againſt any Thing blameable in *their* Principles or Conduct; but by Way of finding more ſeaſonable Employment for our Cenſures (if we will be cenſuring) where we are more concerned. And I would hope alſo, if [a] *our Lot is fallen to us in a Ground* hitherto firm under us, what has been ſaid may remind You, *Whom* We are to *thank for giving us Warning*; and to *whoſe* unmerited Goodneſs it is owing, that [b] *the Earth* hath not *ſwallowed Us up alſo.*

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[a] Jer. II. 11. [b] Judg. XVI. 35.

4. Let me add (and it is the *Laſt* Conſideration I ſhall offer under this Head) that, whatever our *Tranſgreſſions* may be, they will, if perſiſted in after repeated Admonitions, be highly aggravated, and become on that Account yet *more exceedingly ſinful.*

It is *not* even *ſuppoſed* in my Text, that God's *Judgments* will fail of producing the Reformation of Thoſe that come within the Reach of their Inſtruction. When therefore any Perſons or Nations neglect to make this Natural Improvement of them; *Their* Guilt muſt exceed all ordinary Meaſures, and (we may reaſonably conclude) will be viſited with a proportionable Severity. [c] *O* Lord (ſays the Prophet *Jeremiah) are not Thine Eyes upon the Truth? Thou haſt ſtricken them, but They have not grieved; Thou haſt conſumed them, but They have refuſed to receive Correction; They have made their Faces harder than a Rock; They have refuſed to return.* The Holy Man, upon obſerving ſuch incorrigible Obſtinacy, in appearance triumphing over all God's repeated Chaſtiſements, ſeems aſtoniſhed at His Forbearance, and almoſt ready to give up the Belief of His Moral Rectitude. But he ſoon recovers himſelf, and foretells the Doom of a People ſo obdurate, when he perceives them adding [a] *Shameleſsneſs* to their other *Abominations:* And he lived to ſee all his Doubts fully removed, and his Denunciations againſt them abundantly verified.

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[a] Pſal. XVI. 6, 7.
[b] Num. XVI. 34.
[c] Jer. V. 3.

How long the great Governour of the Univerſe may, in any particular Inſtance, think fit to ſuſpend the Execution of the dreadful Sentence againſt a guilty Land, it is not poſſible for us to ſay; becauſe it is not poſſible for us to take in the whole Scheme of His Providence, or even all the Reaſons which may haſten or retard His Judicial Proceedings. And accordingly, we find in the ſacred Hiſtory (the moſt complete Hiſtory of Divine Providence) more Examples than one of abandoned Nations, that had the Sentence againſt them reſpited for ſome Ages, after they appear to have been devoted to Deſtruction. But in no Hiſtory, ſacred or profane, can we find an Account of any Nation remarkably immoral or impious, which was not, ſooner or later, as remarkably puniſhed, and if finally incorrigible as remarkably extirpated. The *Judge of all the Earth* will, we may be aſſured, never let His Corrections *return to Him vain* or ineffectual; nor ſuffer either Perſonal or National Impenitence *finally* to prevail againſt His righteous Government. *Perſonal* Wickedneſs may indeed, and often doth, in preſent Appearance, eſcape His Vengeance; becauſe Perſonal Wickedneſs may, and moſt certainly will, receive its deſerved Wages in another State. But this cannot be the Caſe of *National* Impiety. Nations cannot be puniſhed, becauſe They will not *as Nations* ſubſiſt, in another World. And therefore, Thoſe of them, which will not glorify GOD by a willing Compliance with His repeated Admonitions till the Meaſure of their Iniquities is filled up, ſhall *then* moſt aſſuredly, however unwillingly, glorify Him by their exemplary Deſtruction.

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[a] Jer. VI. 15.

May no ſuch Fate ever attend Theſe, hitherto highly favoured, Kingdoms! May we *ſee* and adore *the Majeſty of the* LORD in all His Diſpenſations; acknowledging in particular *the Rod* of His late Correction, *and who hath appointed it!* May we with all Humility *lay to Heart* the Inſtructions He may be preſumed to intend by it! And, as the ſureſt Improvement we can *learn* from it, may we *Repent and turn* ourſelves *from All our Tranſgreſſions; that ſo Iniquity may not be our Ruin!*

As to *Ourſelves:* We are indeed but a ſmall Part of a large Community, and each of us by himſelf a ſtill ſmaller. Yet ſomething every one of us may contribute towards a general Amendment by reforming *Himſelf*, and many of us ſtill more (more than can well be computed) by Authority, or Example, or Influence upon thoſe about us: Nor can our Endeavours be too earneſt, if prudently conducted, nor will they (I would hope) be wholly unſucceſsful, on this important Occaſion.—But if, after all, neither our faireſt Hopes, nor our moſt earneſt Endeavours, ſhould find the deſired Concurrence of others; We muſt then be allowed to remember, that *One Thing is* ſtill more *needful* to us all, *ſeparately* conſidered; which is alſo, by the Aſſiſtance of Divine Grace, more within our Power: Namely, That each of us ſhould *for himſelf* make a proper Application of publick Warnings, and at leaſt [a] *deliver his own Soul by his Righteouſneſs.*

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[a] Ezek. XIV. 14.

II. You will permit me, therefore, beſides the foregoing Leſſons of *Publick Inſtruction*, which Societies or Nations are concerned to learn from Divine *Judgments*, briefly to point out a few others, of a more *Perſonal Influence*, which *the Judgments* now *in the Earth* ſeem fitted to teach the *particular Inhabitants* of it. And,

Firſt, What can be a more obvious Deduction from the Occurrences in View, than *The exceeding great Frailty of human Life*, and of every Thing belonging to it?

Every Day's Obſervation might indeed afford abundant Inſtances of *This*; and perhaps their Frequency may itſelf render the Thought too familiar to make a proper Impreſſion upon Us. A Thought however it is, for its Uſe and Importance, at all Times worthy to make the ſtrongeſt Impreſſion: And it muſt ſurely become yet more affecting, when from any uncommon Cauſe a *Thouſand fall beſide us, and Ten Thouſand*, as it were, *at our Right-Hand.* But, when *the Earth* itſelf *openeth and ſwalloweth up*, not only Thouſands of our Fellow-Creatures, but large and opulent and populous Cities; *laying low* the ſtrongeſt and moſt ſtupendous

Edifices, the Works of human Induſtry, and the Boaſt of human Pride, for many Ages: When (in the *Prophet*'s Language) [a] *the Day of the* LORD *ſhall be upon every Thing that is proud and lofty, upon every high Tower, and upon every fenced Wall*: When wealthy Potentates and mighty Princes, finding no Shelter in their moſt ſtately Palaces, no Sanctuary in their moſt magnificent Temples, ſhall be forced to flee [b] *to the Clefts of the Rocks and to the Tops of the ragged Rocks; for Fear of the* LORD, *and for the Glory of his Majeſty; when He ariſeth to ſhake terribly the Earth!* — How natural, how unavoidable, muſt the Reflection be; [c] "*Ceaſe Ye from Man, whoſe Breath is in his Noſtrils! For wherein is he to be accounted of*; And hence,

Again, We are led to reflect upon *The Preſumption of confidently projected Schemes of Gain*, and the Vanity of an over-proportioned Eagerneſs in the Purſuit of them.

The Words of St. *James* are very remarkable to this Purpoſe. [d] *Go to now, Ye that ſay,* "*To-day or to-morrow we will go into ſuch a City, and tarry there a Year, and buy and ſell and get Gain.*" *Whereas Ye know not*

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[a] Iſai. II. 12. [b] Ibid. v. 21. [c] Ibid. v. 22. [d] Jam. IV. 13, 14, 15, 17.

what ſhall be on the Morrow: For what is Your Life? Or (let me add) what is the City, *where* Ye propoſe to traffick? *Your Life is but as a Vapour, that appeareth for a little Time, and then vaniſheth away:* And as to the City, *That* may, with all its Wealth and all its Splendour, be in a Moment *laid waſte into ruinous Heaps.* Not that the Apoſtle is here diſcouraging a prudent Forecaſt, or honeſt Activity, in our proper Buſineſs: He not only afterward approves of them, when exerted in *Dependence upon the* LORD's *Will,* but may be underſtood to require them in Conſequence of the Uncertainty of Life, when He concludes, *Therefore to him that knoweth* (that ſeeth an Opportunity or fit Occaſion) *to do Good, and doeth it not, to him it is Sin.* However, if provident Induſtry in ſecular Purſuits may be here encouraged, preſumptuous Confidence is certainly condemned. Nor muſt we forget to add our LORD's Caution againſt having our [a] *Hearts overcharged with the Cares of this Life.* Cares indeed we may innocently have, of one Kind or other, during our Abode in this World; nor ſhall we ordinarily do our Duty to GOD or Man, to Ourſelves or our Country, without them. But great is the Danger of being *over-charged with* them, or letting them have too great a Share of our Attention, too faſt Hold of our Affections. [a] *For as a Snare* muſt any unforeſeen Diſaſter, any unexpected Call, eſpecially the laſt deciſive Call, unavoidably *come on all them that dwell,* thoſe more eſpecially, who in their Hearts and Affections *dwell, on the Earth!* For which Reaſon,

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[a] Luke XXI. 34.

Farther, We may hence alſo infer *The Danger of Senſuality and Selfiſhneſs, but eſpecially of Intemperance,* in the Uſe of ſuch Good Things as we may have accumulated.

There is not in fact any Thing, which naturally more indiſpoſes Men for the Exertion of their Powers againſt impending Evils, more diſables them from bearing up *when Diſtreſs or Anguiſh* of any Sort *cometh upon them,* or more diſqualifies them for the amazing Arreſt of Death, whilſt it moſt of all expoſeth them to it; than an habitual or exceſſive Self-Indulgence in ſenſual Gratifications: A *Sin, which eaſily beſets* Thoſe, who not only imagine they are at preſent [b] *rich, and are increaſed with Goods, and have Need of Nothing,* but flatter themſelves that they *have much*

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[a] Luke XXI. 35.

[b] Comp. Rev. III. 17. with Luke XII. 20.

Good laid up for many Years yet to come; and then, by too natural a Tranſition, fondly ſuppoſe, they have nothing left to think of but to *take their Eaſe, eat, drink and be merry:* Little conſidering, that *the ſame Night their Souls may be required of them*; or however, that *Thoſe Things which They have provided* may as ſoon be demanded by the *real Proprietor* of them, and themſelves left *wretched, and miſerable* and poor *and naked.* Yet, of how many *Thouſands* has the one or the other of theſe lately been the Caſe! And how forcibly muſt ſuch Examples impreſs upon the Minds of wealthy Perſons the Direction our *Bleſſed* Lord hath given them; (a Direction, important at all Times, but on a *Day of Faſting* peculiarly ſeaſonable) to convert their periſhable Superfluities into *a better and an enduring Subſtance*, by employing a due Proportion of them in Works of Beneficence and Piety. For this is what He inculcates in thoſe emphatical Words, [a] I SAY UNTO YOU, *Make to Yourſelves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs; that, when Ye fail, Ye may be received into everlaſting Habitations.* Yet,

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[a] Luke XVI. 9. See alſo the ſame Advice more fully expreſſed, 1 Tim. VI. 17, 18, 19.

Once more, We muſt not forget *The Wiſdom and Neceſſity of conſtant Prayer and habitual Watchfulneſs,* in order to prevent our being fatally ſurprized by our laſt Hour.

This is indeed a moſt important Improvement to be made of the diſaſtrous Events We have been conſidering. Thoſe Conſequences of any ſuch unexpected Stroke, which affect us in our Fortunes or our Lives only, will ſoon be over: But there are others, that will follow us much farther, and affect us *for ever.* Of *Theſe* we have the fulleſt Intimation from our Judge Himſelf in one of His lateſt and longeſt and moſt remarkable [a] Diſcourſes to His beloved Apoſtles: Which no one, ſurely, can read or hear without being deeply affected with the Calamities there foretold, as alſo with the Deſcriptions of ſome other Appearances, that can hardly be explained but by ſuppoſing a Reference to *the End of this World* itſelf, and to His own ſecond *Coming to Judgment.* But what I would here chiefly obſerve to You is That Variety of Illuſtration, under which He ſets before His Hearers the ſad Conſequences of being *overtaken unawares* on any ſuch Occaſion; and

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[a] Recorded in Matt. XXIV. and XXV. and more briefly in Mark XIII. and Luke XXI.

That Earneſtneſs, with which He recommends the Exerciſes of [a] *Watching* and *Praying always*; as the only ſecure Preparatives for *thoſe Things that were coming to paſs*, and ſuch as could alone enable them *to ſtand before the Son of Man*. Now, we know that, in this Inſtance particularly, [b] *what He ſaid unto* His Apoſtles *He ſaid unto All*. And never ſurely can His Admonitions be more applicable, than to a Seaſon of ſuch extenſive Warnings, as the World has lately been alarmed with: Which, though we have no Authority to interpret them, yet may well carry our Thoughts forward to that tremendous Period; when HE who hath, in a Manner ſo extraordinary, *ſhaken the Earth*, [c] ſhall *yet once more ſhake not This Earth only but alſo Heaven*.

Miſtake me not, as if, under the Duties of Watching and Praying *always*, I were exhorting You to be every Moment of your Lives *thinking* of Your great Maſter's Approach, or even for the greateſt Part of them *actually* upon Your Knees for fear of being ſurprized by Him. No: The Condition of Your Nature renders the Former impracticable; and a proper Diſcharge of *thoſe Good*

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[a] Luke XXI. 36. [b] Mark XIII. 37. [c] Heb. XII. 26.

Works, thoſe honeſt Employments, *which* God *hath ordained that we ſhould walk in them* through Life, will as little admit of the Latter. But thus much I may be permitted to recommend to You *All,* that Ye never let a Day paſs without many ſerious Thoughts upon that unchangeable State, into which every Day may finally introduce You; and to *Maſters of Families* in particular, that Ye fail not regularly to call together Thoſe under Your Care to a joint Acknowledgment of Your continual Dependence upon Almighty God, and a joint Application for His Protection and Favour. Nothing, I am perſuaded, will have a more beneficial Influence, even upon Your temporal Concerns, than ſuch domeſtick Exerciſes of Piety: not only as they will naturally tend to ſecure the Faithfulneſs of thoſe, upon whoſe Faithfulneſs You muſt perpetually rely; but as they will recommend You to *That Bleſſing,* which alone *maketh* truly *Rich.* But, beyond this, ſuch Addreſſes, if equally conſtant and devout, will in all Events make Him Your Friend, whoſe Friendſhip will be of more Value to You and Your's, than that of the whole World beſides. We have, indeed, no Commiſſion from Him to promiſe You an Exemption from the ordinary Caſualties incident to human Affairs and human Life; or that, if the *deſtroying Angel* ſhould be authorized to *viſit the Houſes around You,* he ſhall have it in Charge to *paſs over* Your's. This would be a Diſcrimination, for which the Retributions of the preſent State were never intended. But it ſhould be ſufficient, that, with regard to Retributions of infinitely greater Moment, [a] *the Foundation of* GOD *ſtandeth ſure:* Should Your Habitations and Your Lives, with Thoſe of all that are dear to You, be involved in the ſame Ruin with Thoſe about You; amidſt all this Confuſion, *the* LORD *knoweth them that are* HIS, and will publickly own them as ſuch [b] *in that Day when He maketh up His Jewels:* When He will put a final Difference, and enable Men and Angels to *diſcern, between them that* have *ſerved Him and them that ſerved Him not.*

TO Conclude: We of this Nation, after having, for ſome Years paſt, been awakened by many awful Calls upon Us of various Kinds, ſeem now to be upon the Brink of a *War:* A State, burthenſome and uncomfortable at beſt; and in which, notwithſtanding the commendable Activity of our Preparations, and our ſuppoſed Strength at Sea, I preſume, no wiſe Man would, at *any* Time, pronounce Us ſuperiour to Danger. But, if *Glorying in our own Might* ever can be peculiarly unſeaſonable, it muſt be ſo at a Time, when Variety of Terrours, ſtill farther ſurpaſſing all human Efforts, have lately alarmed us on every Side, and may be to us alſo (how ſoon we know not) *the Beginnings of Sorrows.*--At ſuch a Juncture, highly proper muſt it be for Us, *as a Nation*, thus publickly to humble ourſelves for our manifold Tranſgreſſions before *the* LORD *of Heaven and Earth*; and thus devoutly to recommend ourſelves and our Cauſe to His Protection and Bleſſing. And, if theſe ſeaſonable Acts of Devotion be but accompanied with a ſincere Repentance for our Perſonal Sins, and ſucceeded by a laſting Reformation of our National Conduct: We may then ſecurely [a] *Truſt in the* LORD *for ever; for in the* LORD JEHOVAH *is everlaſting Strength:* We may then humbly hope to avert His *Judgments* now in *the Earth* from falling upon our own Part of it; as alſo, by His Aſſiſtance, either to diſpoſe our *Enemies to be*, upon reaſonable Terms, *at Peace with* us, or effectually to defeat their unreaſonable Enterprizes againſt us.---However, ſince we can neither be anſwerable for the Reſolutions of Men nor the Events of Things; ſo long as we conſcientiouſly diſcharge the Duties of our reſpective Stations, we ſhall the leſs need to [a] *be afraid of any ſudden Fear, or* even *of Deſolation* itſelf *when it cometh.* Our proper TREASURE is beyond the Reach of ſuch Caſualties: And ill would it become Us *Chriſtians*, to be *terrified* on ſuch Occaſions as if our ALL were at-ſtake, or to be *inconſoleable* for any Loſſes we may happen to ſuſtain, *like Men without Hope* of any future Reparation. [b] *We know, that, if our earthly Houſe of this Tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a Building of* GOD, *an Houſe not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.* If this ancient City (which may Providence ever preſerve!) *ſhould* ſhare the Fate of other flouriſhing Cities lately as little apprehenſive as Itſelf: Yet [c] *We look for a City, that hath Foundations,* truly ſo called, *whoſe Builder and Maker is* GOD. Nay, *ſhould* That great DAY *of the* LORD *come*, whilſt *We* ourſelves *are alive and remain*; [d] *in the which* (we are aſſured) *the Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great Noiſe, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat, the Earth alſo*

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[a] 2 Tim. II. 19. [b] Mal. III. 17, 18.

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[a] Iſ. XXVI. 4.

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[a] Prov. III. 25.
[b] 2 Cor. V. 1.
[c] Heb. II. 10.
[d] 2 Pet. III. 10.

with all the Works that are therein ſhall be burnt up!--[a] *Nevertheleſs We, according to His Promiſe, look for new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth* RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"Of which *Righteouſneſs*, O merciful GOD, may *the Inhabitants of the World* ſo *learn* the *peaceable Fruits* from *Thy Judgments here on Earth*, that *thy* CHURCH *may joyfully ſerve Thee in all Godly Quietneſs*; 'till We finally come to the perfect Exerciſe, the full Fruition, of *It* in Thy *Everlaſting Kingdom*: Through JESUS CHRIST, our LORD." *Amen.*

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[a] 2 Pet. III. 13.

A
SERMON

Preached before the
UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD*,
At St. *MARY*'s CHURCH,
On *Sunday*, *June* 19. 1757.

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JOHN IX. 4.

I muſt work the Works of Him that ſent me, while it is Day: The Night cometh, when no Man can work.

"WHAT *is the Cauſe, that the former Days were better than Theſe?*" was long ago cenſured as an *unwiſe Enquiry:* And I will not ſay, that there would be at preſent either more Pertinency in the ſame Queſtion, or more Juſtice in the Complaint implied in it. Yet, how raſh ſoever it might be, to pronounce peremptorily concerning the comparative Goodneſs of different Ages or Countries upon the Whole; We ſhall, I preſume, in view of their prevailing Modes of Thinking or Acting, find Room enough for diſtinguiſhing them from each other. And, to bring this Reflection nearer to ourſelves; If our own Age and Country may, (as I hope it juſtly may,) claim ſome Advantage on Account of the faſhionable Exertion of a few really amiable Qualities; Its proper Character, I fear, will be found yet more ſtrongly marked by others of a leſs reputable Kind: Such as, a Love of Eaſe, and Fondneſs for ſenſual Pleaſure; an Averſion from ſerious Thought, and Impatience of almoſt any uſeful Employment.

A Taſte this, which hath for ſome Time been ſpreading, not among the gay and ſprightly alone, but even among the grave and ſedentary (I had almoſt ſaid, the ſtudious) Part of the Nation. For otherwiſe, whence comes it, that the Writers of the Times ſo generally find it expedient to accommodate to *This* not only the Entertainment, but the Inſtruction, they are pleaſed to provide for us? In Fact, Diverſion is become at leaſt one principal Buſineſs, and Skill therein an important Branch of Science, in our Days. A general Relaxation in Principle hath been gradually introducing a proportionable Careleſſneſs in Practice: 'Till, from a ſceptical Unconcern about the future, We are but too naturally ſunk into a moſt unmanly Self-Indulgence for the preſent. "*What We ſhall do in the End hereof,*" is a ſerious Enquiry; and would deſerve to be as ſeriouſly conſidered, were it not already too probably reſolved; by Wretchedneſs, Diſorders, and Tumults in the Country; by Decay, Murmurings, and Complainings in the City; by unſucceſsful Enterprizes and other mortifying Occurrences abroad; I wiſh we could not add, by (Thoſe conſtant Concomitants of expenſive Pleaſures) Corruption, Greedineſs of Gain, and Want of Feeling for the Publick, almoſt every-where at home. But, leaving Effects of this Sort to be eſtimated by Others; it may concern *Us* to conſider, What might be the Conſequences of indulging a like trifling, indolent, luxurious Humour in Places of Education, and even among *the Sons of the Prophets*. Now, *Wiſdom* is not born with any of us; nor is it to be acquired, where it moſt abounds, without attentive Obſervation, and painful *Search for it as for hid Treaſure:* And, if, from a general Diſuſe of ſuch neceſſary Means of Improvement, *Theſe Lights that are among Us* ſhould become *Darkneſs, how great muſt be that Darkneſs!* If, inſtead of aſpiring after Skill in ancient Languages, and Acquaintance with ancient Cuſtoms; after Readineſs in the Art of right Reaſoning, and Acuteneſs in detecting fallacious Pretences to it; after Depth in uſeful Sciences, and above all an *early Know-*

ledge of the holy Scriptures -- the younger Attendants upon the Inſtructions here offered *ſhould* ſit down contented with Accompliſhments far more eaſily attainable: The original Records of our Holy Religion will in proportion be neglected: Its Evidences will loſe much of their Clearneſs and Efficacy: Its genuine Doctrines and primitive Polity will be miſunderſtood: The Obligations It lays upon Its Profeſſors to Unity in Faith and Communion in Worſhip will be little attended to; whence Advantage will be taken, on one Hand to ſtrain them too far by Thoſe, who charge Us with Apoſtaſy; and to explain them quite away on the other by Thoſe, who envy Us the Privileges of our Eſtabliſhment. And, if ever thoſe well-tryed Principles, upon which, while ſtudied and underſtood, our National Church hath been moſt ſucceſsfully defended, and hath hitherto been an impregnable Bulwark of the Reformation, ſhould be laid aſide and forgotten; ſound Learning and uſeful Science, and with them real Virtue and rational Piety, would (I am perſuaded) ſoon give Way to Barbariſm and Superſtition: --- That Superſtition moſt probably, againſt which We profeſs to entertain the warmeſt Zeal; and againſt which our *Zeal* cannot well be too warm, if it be but exerted *according to Knowledge*.

Let me not here be miſunderſtood, as arrogantly accuſing, where I only mean affectionately to caution. Senſible I am, that ſober Induſtry, purſuing its Object in Silence and Solitude, is not always ſufficiently careful to *let its Light ſo ſhine before Men, that they may ſee its good Works:* Whilſt the undaunted Worthleſſneſs of a Few *that are otherwiſe cannot be hid*; becauſe they themſelves will needs be [a] *proclaiming their own Folly to every one* they meet, *as they walk by the Way*. Never, I believe, were totally vicious Characters leſs frequent in *This Place* than at preſent. Yet, how happily ſoever We may have hitherto *eſcaped the Pollutions that are in the World*; it cannot be unſeaſonable to guard againſt the Infection of Its Levities and Follies: Nor will it (I truſt) be thought a blameable Attempt, if I take Occaſion, in a ſtill more general View, to propoſe a modeſt Application of the Reſolution in my Text, with a ſerious Enforcement of the Reaſons on which it is founded. --- "*I*
"*muſt work the Work of Him that ſent me,*
"*while it is Day: The Night cometh, when no*
"*Man can Work.*"

[a] Eccl. X. 3.

Not to detain You with any unneceſſary Enlargement upon the Occaſion of Theſe Words, or their Relation to the Context; it may be proper juſt to obſerve, that they are the Declaration of our Bleſſed *LORD Himſelf:* And, as *He* was, in a peculiar Manner, *ſanctified and ſent into the World,* in order to perform ſuch *Works* in it *as none other Man Did,* or could Do; We are obliged to acknowledge concerning This His Declaration, in its higheſt Senſe, that *never Man ſpake like This Man.* However, ſince He is pleaſed to argue from Principles, in which We are All of Us concerned, We have the leſs Reaſon to think ourſelves unconcerned in the Uſe He makes of them. Something, no Doubt, there was, not only in the End of our Lord's Miſſion, and in the Nature of His Works, but in the Perfection of His whole Character, far beyond the Reach of our higheſt Attainments. And if, notwithſtanding this, We are exhorted to *walk as He walked:* If, in particular, He hath by His Meekneſs in *Suffering left us an Example:* Well may We encourage one another *to follow His Steps, who went about Doing Good,* by a like Aſſiduity in *Working the Works of Him that* hath *ſent Us* alſo: Eſpecially ſince it is certain, that *upon*

Us too the *Night* is *coming*, *when none* of us will longer be able to *work*.

The Words thus apply'd, eaſily reſolve themſelves into the following Obſervations. —That We are All *ſent into Life* by Almighty GOD: —That He ſent us *to work*, not to be idle, *in it*: — That our Activity muſt be *regularly exerted* in working *His Works*: —That for *Theſe* He allows us a Day, or *ſhort Space of Time* only: — And that, therefore, *while This laſteth*, we are concern'd to make the *beſt Uſe of it* we can; leſt *Night* overtake us, before our Taſk be finiſhed, — Which well-known Truths I need only wiſh I could recommend to Your *attentive Recollection*, by Conſiderations in any Meaſure ſuited to their real and univerſal Importance. — But let us proceed to Particulars. And,

I. We are *Sent into Life* by Almighty GOD: We were *not born at all Adventures*; We grow not up *by Accident*; Nor are We, during our Abode here, at our own Diſpoſal.

That We are SENT, is itſelf an awful Thought: And the Obſervation, how trite ſoever, may yet, I ſuppoſe, bear to be inculcated. For, whilſt perhaps No-body doubts of it, Who is there that duly attends to, or properly applies, it? Who is there that conſiders Life as a Truſt committed to him; and is not rather ſolicitous to find out ſome artful Expedient for paſſing the tedious Hours along with leaſt Trouble, than ſtudious to employ them with moſt Advantage? Nay even of Thoſe who, under the wiſe Direction of others, have happily contracted an early Liking for Buſineſs; or who, from afterwards obſerving the Reputation and other Conveniences attending it, (Motives very proper as far as they go) make it their Choice to be employ'd rather than wholly idle; how few are there who *work becauſe they are Sent*: preferring a Life of Action upon a Principle of Conſcience and Fidelity to *Him that ſends them*?

Yet ſuch is the Caſe, and ſuch ought to be the Sentiments, of every one of us. “That *it is* GOD *who hath made us, and not we ourſelves,*” is an Aſſertion not the leſs worthy of Attention, becauſe by daily Repetition rendered familiar to us. Or, if we will needs have it, that we were at firſt produced, and have ſince grown up, according to ſtated *Laws of Nature,* as they are called; Yet the moſt received Philoſophy would teach us, that *Theſe Laws* are *His Laws,* and that ſubordinate

Agents perpetually derive from Him all their Efficiency. The *Oracles of GOD* conſtantly ſpeak in the ſame Language. They aſcribe our [a] *Make and Formation to* JEHOVAH's *Hands.* His [b] *Eyes did ſee our Subſtance yet being unperfect, and in His Book were all our Members written.* Had not Theſe *day by day been faſhioned* by His unerring Care, *as bidden, untimely Births we had not been:* Or, had not He, in this Senſe alſo, *cauſed the Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs, the Day* of Underſtanding had never *dawned,* nor *its Day-ſtar ariſen in our Hearts.* To Him likewiſe we owe the Preſervation as well as the firſt Grant of our Being, and all our Faculties; *Thro' Him have We been holden up ever ſince We were born; and by Him* alone *We eſcape Death.* Nay He challengeth to Himſelf not only the regular Productions in our Species, but even the ſeeming Deviations from His own Plan. [c] *Who hath made Man's Mouth?* ſaith He to His Servant *Moſes; or who maketh the Dumb or Deaf, the Seeing or the Blind? have not I, the LORD?* And whatever wiſe Reaſons there may be (as wiſe Reaſons, no Doubt, there are) for thoſe immature Births, imperfect Formations, or untimely Deaths, that are often permitted to fall under our Notice; *One* important Purpoſe they certainly will ſerve, if they ſerve to remind us, that Birth, Perfection of Parts, Growth and Maturity, are not Things of Courſe, or ſuch as depend ſolely upon uncontrolled Natural Cauſes; but are ultimately reſolvable into HIS Good-Pleaſure, *by whom We were* at firſt *fearfully and wonderfully made*; *who* continually *holdeth our Souls in Life*; nay *in whom We live, and move, and have our being.*

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[a] Pſ. CXIX. 73. [b] Pſ. CXXXIX. 16. [c] Exod. IV. 11.

We *are not*, therefore, *our own:* We received our Exiſtence from *GOD, the GOD of the Spirits of all Fleſh*; and on Him We depend for every Moment's Continuance of of it. And, as *our Time is in His Hand*, ſo is our Management of every Portion of it *noted in His Book.* He, who entruſts us with *This* and all our *Talents*, will aſſuredly one Day *come and reckon with us.* Our whole Frame and Conſtitution; That Freedom of Agency, with which We feel ourſelves endued; That progreſſive State, whereof We are conſcious; That Apprehenſion We naturally have of a ſuperiour Obſerver; Above all, the Notices given us by our Judge Himſelf; In ſhort, all Things within, all Things without us, conſpire in proclaiming, That

We muſt give an Account of ourſelves *to Him that ſent us.* — *What Account* will be expected, might have been deduced from the foregoing Reflections, though my *Text* had not ſo clearly implied,

II. That We are *ſent* into Life, *not to ſit ſtill* only, or to *take our Paſtime therein*; but *to work* and be induſtrious, in order to our being uſeful in It.

For, if We are ſent hither by a Being of infinite Wiſdom, our Errand, We may be ſure, muſt not only be worthy of His own Perfections, but ſuited to the Powers He hath given us, and the Situation in which He hath placed us. In particular: Do we find ourſelves in a World, where every Species of Creatures about us is inceſſantly *fulfilling* our common Creator's *Word?* We cannot imagine, that He ſhould intend or allow *Us* to be the *only idle* and unſerviceable Parts of His Creation: Much leſs can We ſuppoſe Him, after *preparing us Bodies* admirably fitted for Action and Uſe, to leave us at Liberty to apply theſe exquiſite Pieces of Workmanſhip either to no Uſe, or to ſuch as is even worſe than none: Leaſt of all would He have *taught us more than the Beaſts of the Earth, and* *made us wiſer than the Fowls of Heaven,* for no other End, but that ſuch ſuperiour Endowments ſhould be loſt in an inſignificant Round of *Sitting down to eat and to drink, and then Riſing up to play.* And yet, of all this He hath given us ſtill farther Intimation, by having made Action and Exerciſe not only the ordinary Means of improving our ſeveral Powers, but a neceſſary Condition of retaining them; by having placed no valuable Acquiſition within the Reach of the lazy or the negligent; and (which may deſerve ſome farther Illuſtration) by having exempted *no Seaſon of Life, no Situation in Society, no State of Human Nature* itſelf, from every Sort of Engagement.

No *Seaſon of Life* can be wholly excuſed from Buſineſs. — Confirmed Manhood is indeed that Portion of it, in which the Faculties, whether of Body or Mind, uſually appear to be at their *beſt Eſtate*: *This* therefore is moſt fitted for ſuch Undertakings as require a ſtrenuous Exertion of the one or the other; and a dreadful Account muſt *They* have to give, by whom this important Part of Life hath been *vilely caſt away* in inglorious Eaſe and Senſuality. However *This,* tho' the principal, is by no Means the only, Seaſon for

Labour and Action: Inactivity even in Childhood is unnatural; and, if Youth muſt generally be ſpent in preparing for the Offices of maturer Age; ſuch preparatory Exerciſes are themſelves *Works* of no ſmall Pains and Aſſiduity, as well as of indiſpenſable Neceſſity to render the remaining Stages of the Man's Journey through Life, either beneficial to his Fellow-Travellers, or even ſupportable to himſelf. Nay, as to more advanced Years; neither can Theſe be abſolutely diſcharged from attending upon Services of the gentler, but not leſs uſeful, Kind: ſo long as the Ignorance of Youth ſhall need Inſtruction, and its Impetuoſity Reſtraint; or ſo long as the Operations of Man's Eſtate ſhall want to be directed, and ſometimes alſo its Raſhneſs to be moderated by ſober Advice and friendly Reprehenſion: In which reſpects, ſince *Men of* Virtue and *Piety ſhall bring forth more Fruit in their Age*; even gray Hairs muſt claim no Diſpenſation for Unprofitableneſs; ſo long as the Mind itſelf retains any Capacity for thus beneficially employing the Reſult of Its long Experience and Obſervation.

Neither can any *Station or Circumſtances in Society* give a Releaſe from Employment. — With Regard to the greateſt Part of Mankind,

kind, the Point is evident: Theſe *muſt in the Sweat of their Faces eat their Bread.* And, as to thoſe Few in Compariſon, whoſe Accommodation is more amply provided for; They alſo muſt, if They will preſerve their Innocence and Virtue, or even their Health and Reliſh for any other Bleſſing, engage in ſome Occupation, or contrive ſome Exerciſe, for that Purpoſe; it being ſo ordered, in our very Conſtitution, that, *if Any Perſon will not work, neither ſhall he eat.* And yet, ſurely, fit Occaſions for Working can nowhere be wanting, any more than Obligations to embrace them. The Management of a plentiful Fortune, and the Demands of an exalted Station, themſelves call for no ordinary Degree of Vigilance or Activity: And where Works of Neceſſity are leaſt preſſing, Works of Piety and Humanity, of Friendſhip and Charity, will not fail the more ſtrongly to ſolicit us. *The Poor we have always with us*; and They, whoſe Time lies moſt upon their Hands, *whenſoever they will, may* always commendably, and methinks agreeably, employ it in *doing them Good.* To all which let me add, what Men of Affluence and Dignity are much concerned to bear in Mind, That their Examples will be active, ſhould They themſelves be idle; or, at leaſt, that their Lives, how trifling ſoever they may now be, will one Day be found to have no ſmall Weight in increaſing their Condemnation.

Nay, once more: No *Condition of Human Nature* ever was, ever will be, exempt from every Kind of Working. — Even the State of Innocence was by no Means a State of Inactivity. The Fall of our firſt Parents introduced Toil and Drudgery into our World, but found Induſtry already in it: For the *Dreſſing of the Garden* was, We know *Adam*'s Buſineſs, though not his painful Labour. And, if after Death *there remaineth a Reſt for the People of GOD*; even This Reſt is not a Freedom from Action, but only from Sin and, its never-failing Attendants, Wearineſs and Pain. *From* ſuch *Labours They, that dye in the LORD, ſhall then reſt:* But the *Works* of Contemplation and Love, of Adoration and Praiſe, *ſhall* ſo *follow them* as for ever to make a Part of their Exerciſe and their Happineſs. — In ſhort: In whatever Capacity we view Human Nature; whether in its Original Perfection or its preſent Degeneracy; whether in its preſent State of Diſcipline or its future State of Glory; We may pronounce concerning Idleneſs (what was long ago ſaid of *Pride)* that It *was not made for Man.*

Were it needful or proper to dwell longer on ſo beaten a Topick, this deſpicable Vice might be expoſed in every View, in which it can be conſidered, whether Natural, Moral, or Religious: As it debaſeth our Nature, and ſinks us below our Rank in the Scale of Beings: As it renders uſeleſs, and by Degrees extinguiſheth, every good Quality in us; whilſt it ſupplies Nouriſhment and Incentives to every bad one: As it indiſpoſeth us towards every Duty, and lays us open to almoſt every Temptation: As it reſiſts the wiſe Purpoſe of Providence in this World; and in the next, not only cuts off all Title to any Inheritance, but finally ſubjects us to the tremendous Doom of the *unprofitable Servant.* —If even an *Heathen Hiſtorian* could learn from Nature to count *that* Man's *Exiſtence* alone worthy of the Name of *Living* or *Vital Enjoyment*, who is engaged in ſome *uſeful Art*, ſome *Undertaking* capable of tranſmitting his *Fame* to After-Times: Shall we *Chriſtians ſtand here all the Day idle*, as if *No one had hired us? We*, who *are bought with a Price* of ineſtimable Value; and who are, as ſuch, under peculiar Obligations to *glorify* GOD *in our Body and in our Spirit:* Both *which are GOD's.*

However, after all, it is not expected that every Moment of Men's Lives ſhould be thus employed. Neither the Contexture of our Bodies, nor the Frame of our Minds, will endure to be perpetually upon the Stretch. Without ſeaſonable Intervals of Relaxation, We muſt ſoon become incapable of Working: And, notwithſtanding all our Care, Occaſions there will be, either of bodily Indiſpoſition, or Diſcompoſure of Mind, or Both; when, (as We humbly hope) *He,* who *knoweth whereof we are made,* will not be *ſtrict to mark* our involuntary Intermiſſions, nor ſevere in calling us to Account for them. — But then, theſe very Deductions from our Time muſt greatly enhance the Value of the Remainder: The more of our precious Moments have been, or may be, ſunk in the needful Refreſhment of our wearied Limbs, or the no leſs needful Recreation of our exhauſted Spirits, the fewer can be ſpared for unneceſſary Amuſements; and the more ſtrictly are we obliged to improve to Advantage thoſe that may be yet in our Power: In this Senſe alſo, [a] *Redeeming the Time, because the Days are evil.*

[a] Eph. V. 16.

On the other Hand, neither will every Kind of Employment be allowed in our Accounts, much leſs be admitted as rewardable. [a] *Many buſy Bodies there are, who,* in the Eſtimation of an inſpired Apoſtle, *work not at all,* to any good Purpoſe: Such, in particular, are *Tatlers and Talebearers*, eſpecially in the cenſorious Way; impertinent *Meddlers in other Men's Matters* to the Neglect of their own Concerns; *Movers of Sedition* in Communities, and *Sowers of Diſcord among Brethren.* And, if Activity thus employed can neither be *acceptable unto GOD nor approved of Men*; ſtill leſs ſo, if poſſible, muſt be the miſchievous Pains taken, in corrupting the Principles and debauching the Morals of Youth, by Factors for the Enemy of Mankind, and *Companions of that Deſtroyer:* Theſe and ſuch as Theſe, far from being owned by our LORD as having been engaged in His Service, will finally be diſmiſſed *into outer Darkneſs,* with — "*I know You not: — Depart from me, All Ye Workers of Iniquity!* — Which brings me to obſerve,

III. That We muſt not only be active, but our Activity muſt be rightly directed, and regularly exerted: We muſt *work the Works of Him that ſent us.*

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[a] 2 *Theſſ.* III. 11.

And, ſhould it now be aſked, in the Words of the *Jews* to our Bleſſed Lord, [a] "*What ſhall We Do, that We might work the Works of GOD?*" I conceive, the general Anſwer may well include all lawful Occupations, all ſuch as *miniſter to the Neceſſities,* without *providing for the Luſts,* hurting the Perſons, or injuring the Properties, of ourſelves or others; eſpecially if they are undertaken with an habitual Purpoſe of ſerving our Creator by them, and carried on in Ways conformable to His Laws. Secular Employments, thus conſecrated, become not only allowable Means of Subſiſtence, but rewardable Inſtances of Duty. Indeed, [b] *without theſe cannot a City be inhabited, nor the State of the World maintained.* So long, therefore, as Men proſecute them in their due Order, and in Methods conſiſtent with higher Obligations; ſo long are they commendably anſwering His Intention, who *ſends them* hither: And, by Parity of Reaſon, thoſe liberal Arts and learned Profeſſions, by which Perſons of more extenſive Knowledge are rendered more extenſively ſerviceable *in their Generations,* may juſtly be preſumed to be *well-pleaſing to GOD,* inaſmuch as they are *good and profitable unto Men.*

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[a] Joh. VI. 28.

[b] Eccluſ. XXXVII. 32, 34.

True indeed it is, that *Chriſtianity* hath greatly enlarged and exalted our Views. Yet even this Divine Inſtitution, which hath directed our *Affection* to *Things above*, hath not tied up our Hands from *Things on the Earth.* It permitted, if not required, thoſe, to whom It firſt offered itſelf, to [a] *abide in the ſame Callings, wherein they were called.* Nay we find *This* among St. *Paul*'s Inſtructions to *Titus,* and in him to ſucceeding Governours of the Church, "[b] *Let Ours alſo learn to maintain Good Works for neceſſary Uſes, that they be not unfruitful.*" When [c] *he that ſtole* is, by the ſame Apoſtle, admoniſhed to *ſteal no more,* inſtead of being adviſed to fly from the Temptations by *going out of the World,* he is directed to prevent or diſarm them by provident *Labour, working with his Hands the Thing that is Good.* Safely therefore may We Chriſtians reckon worldly Employments, ſo long as they are lawful ones, among thoſe *good Works, which GOD hath ordained that We ſhould walk in them.* And They, that walk in them thro' Life with Innocence and with Piety, need not doubt, but they are, after the Example of the good *Patriarchs, Walking with GOD.*

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[a] Cor. VII. 20. [b] Titus III. 14. [c] Eph. IV. 28.

In ſome Occupation or other, then, every Member of Society ought to be engaged. But it ſhould be obſerved farther that, as ſuch Occupations are various, and as among them ſome muſt be more immediately incumbent on particular Men than others; ſo Each Man's *Study* will always moſt commendably be exerted in *Doing that Buſineſs* which is properly *his own.* What that is, will generally be pointed out by the ſpecial Talents, Opportunities, Stations, or Callings of the Perſons concerned. [a] *There are in the Body* Civil, as the Apoſtle hath obſerved concerning the Body Spiritual, *many Members:* And, ſince in *Neither* of theſe *Bodies can All Members have the ſame Office,* His following Exhortation may with great Propriety be accommodated to them Both. *Having Gifts differing according to the Grace given unto us; whether Prophecy, let us propheſy according to the Proportion of Faith; or Miniſtry, let us wait on our Miniſtring; or he that teacheth, on Teaching; or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation: He that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity; he that ruleth, with Diligence; he that ſheweth Mercy, with Chearfulneſs.* — In ſhort: [b] *Whatſoever our Hand findeth to Do,* whatſoever *Buſineſs* our proper Station ſets before Us: We muſt *not be ſlothful in it*, but we muſt *Do it with our Might*.

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[a] Rom. XII. 4—8.

[b] Comp. Eccl. IX. 10. with Rom. XII. 11.

Give me Leave to bring home this important Point to Ourſelves. For ſurely We of this Place alſo have *our* Employments; Employments of no ſmall Moment, either to ourſelves or to the Community: Of which, however, I as little need to ſpecify the ſeveral Kinds, as to enumerate the peculiar Obligations we lye under to a faithful Diſcharge of them. --- Whilſt We daily walk upon the ſame Ground that was once trod; whilſt We occupy the Places that were formerly filled; whilſt We partake of the Bounty that was either exerted or enjoyed, by Men of diſtinguiſhed Eminence in their Generations, and *the Glory of their Times*; ſhall I add, whilſt the Images of their Perſons appear full in our View: Muſt *not our Hearts burn within Us*, fired with a generous Ardour after ſome Reſemblance at leaſt of their Excellences, and with a laudable Ambition of being in ſome Degree beneficial to, in ſome Degree reſpected by, thoſe that come after *Us?* And, need I obſerve to You, in the mean while, that They never acquired thoſe Treaſures of Learning, by means whereof they have enriched our publick Repoſitories, and made our Way to Science at once ſhorter and more agreeable, merely by *entering into other Men's Labours* through partial Extracts from them; much leſs by *ſpending their Time in Nothing elſe, but* in peruſing *ſome new Thing*, ſome haſty Production, which, like the *Prophet's Gourd, cometh up in a Night and periſheth in a Night:* But by retired Meditation and laborious Reſearches into thoſe *ſecret* Truths, which *Wiſdom ſheweth to them only, who ſeek her early*, and *walk with her in ſolitary Paths.* And, if We expect to be bleſſed with the ſame Succeſs; to diſcharge the Offices, to which we may be called, with the ſame Reputation; and, in particular, to adorn our holy Profeſſion and defend Its Truths, with the ſame Abilities; We alſo muſt, after their Example, *endure Hardneſs*, and *bear the Yoke, in our Youth:* We muſt, like them, *ſtudy to ſhew ourſelves approved unto GOD* and Man, if we hope to go forth from hence equally *ſanctifyed and meet for the Maſter's Uſe, and* alike *prepared unto every good Work.*

Yet, after all; the *Work* of moſt indiſpenſable Obligation, and in which, whatever our Situation or our Profeſſion may be, we are moſt nearly concerned, is that of promoting our Creator's Glory, by ſetting forward the

Salvation of others, and eſpecially *making* our own *Calling and Election ſure.* A Work, which, though It need not, muſt not ordinarily, ſuperſede all the others, is yet, in Compariſon with them, *the one Thing needful:* It is indeed *that Work,* for the ſake of which chiefly We *came into the World,* and which if we leave undone, *good had it been for us that we had not been ſent* into it: And yet a Work it is, not to be accompliſhed by a few ſlight Endeavours; or without *Striving, Giving Diligence,* and *Watching thereunto with all Perſeverance.* The bare Learning of our Duty is a Work of no ſmall Attention: How much more Pains, then, muſt be taken in the due Performance of it. To touch upon a ſingle Branch of it only, That which more immediately relates to *Ourſelves.* Here, the moſt untainted will find ſome Difficulty in ſubduing the irregular Tendencies of their carnal Part: Whilſt a far greater Number, having (from a bad Education or for Want of a good one, from the Influence of ill Example or the Enticements of ill Company) made ſome Progreſs in a wrong Courſe of Life, muſt beſides the arduous Work of over coming corrupt Inclinations, engage in the ſtill more painful Taſk of extirpating vicious Habits. And All in general will find it Matter of conſtant Labour, though under Divine Grace of ever-increaſing Pleaſure, to rectify their Tempers and *purify their Hearts*; to *bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of* CHRIST; to raiſe their Affections unto a Reliſh for religious Exerciſes and ſpiritual Enjoyments; not only (in the Language of St. *Paul,)* to *put off the Old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Luſts*; but to *put on the New Man, which after GOD is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*: --- That *Holineſs, without which no Man ſhall ſee the LORD!* --- And yet,

IV. For all our Works, this laſt in particular, We have a *Day only*, or *ſhort Time*, allowed us; after which *the Night cometh, when no Man can work.*

This, in the moſt obvious Application, is the *Day* or Seaſon of each Man's *Life*. And that, in this reſpect, *the Night cometh* upon every one of us, can (I ſuppoſe) need no Proof. Thoſe Portions of Duration, with which we are here acquainted, roll on apace: And, whether this Rotation be near its own Concluſion or not, the Share that each of Us hath in it, as his own Time of Tryal, aſſuredly is ſo. In our eaſieſt Moments *there is but a Step between us and*

Death: And the oldeſt Man living may truly ſay, with the experienced Patriarch, "*Few and evil have the Days of the Years of my Life been.*" Yet, no ſooner will this ſhort Life be cloſed, but an End muſt come of all ſuch *Working*, as will be available to our everlaſting Salvation: It being the uniform Doctrine of the inſpired Writings, in ſome Places directly aſſerted, in all taken for granted, that [a] *every Man's* final Allotment will be *according to the Works done in his Body.*

And, as thus much is ſufficient for the Purpoſe of the Obſervation now before us; ſo (by the Way) more than this, I preſume, cannot be urged upon any clear Grounds of Holy Scripture. That [b] *there is in the Grave, whither* We *are going, no* ſuch *Work or Device* as our *Hands* here *find to Do, no* ſuch *Wiſdom or Knowledge* as our preſent Situation engageth us in purſuit of; We allow and maintain: But it doth not follow, nor would the *wiſe Preacher*'s Argument for Induſtry be at all enforced by ſuppoſing, that Death brings with it, not only a Ceſſation from Working, but a Privation of Thought and Perception of every Kind.--If our Expectations in a Future State be uſually (for it muſt not be ſaid, always) referred to the Day of general Retribution; this may well be accounted for by concluding, not that after Death no Degree of Comfort to the Good or of Uneaſineſs to the Bad ſhall take Place, but (which is readily admitted) that the Sentence upon Neither ſhall be publickly pronounced and fully executed, before that *Great Day*. -- And, as to the Suggeſtion, "that the Perſon awaking at the laſt Day from ſuch a *total Sleep* as is contended for, unconſcious of any intervening Duration, will conceive the Moment of his Reſurrection to be *immediately* connected with the Moment of his Deceaſe;" neither will *this* obviate *all* the Scripture Paſſages uſually alledged on the other Side. Hear only the memorable Declaration of St. *Paul:* [a] "*What I ſhould chuſe, I wot not: For I am in a Strait betwixt two; having a Deſire to depart, and to be with* CHRIST; *which is far better: Nevertheleſs, to abide in the Fleſh is more needful for You.*" --- The Alternative in the Apoſtle's View, You will obſerve, was *This:* Whether He ſhould by *departing* become happy with CHRIST, or by *abiding in the Fleſh* continue uſeful in the Church. And, to occaſion any ſuch Difficulty as is here repreſented, He muſt have underſtood, that his making Choice of the Latter of theſe Two Objects before him, would be no ordinary Inſtance of Self-denial in regard to the Former. Now, what Self-denial could there be in foregoing, for the preſent only, an Object at preſent not attainable nor expected by him? The Apoſtle might have *choſen* to continue for many Years with His Beloved *Philippians*, *for their Furtherance and Joy of Faith*, without poſtponing for one Moment any ſuch Enjoyment of his own as was not to commence before the general Judgment. Nor does it appear, how the *Strait*, He here declares himſelf in, can be accounted for; or, how his Affection for his Converts can be viewed in that amiable Light, in which we now ſee it; without ſuppoſing him fully aſſured, that the longer his Life ſhould be continued for their Benefit, juſt ſo much the longer He muſt be detained from what He here calls, “*Being with* CHRIST: And that the ſame Hour, that ſhould remove him from *Them*, would put him in actual Poſſeſſion of That *far better* State.

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[a] 2 Cor. V. 10. [b] Eccl. IX. 10.

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[a] Phil. I. 22—25.

But, to return and proceed: There is a Day of *Health*, often yet ſhorter than that of *Animal Life*, but beyond which there ſeldom remains much Ability for Working to any conſiderable Purpoſe. A Reflection This, of great Moment; and of which therefore We are frequently reminded. In fact, [a] *Slothfulneſs* itſelf *caſteth into a deep Sleep:* Our Faculties through Diſuſe become indiſpoſed, and by degrees unqualified, for any laudable Exertion; till at laſt ſuch an affected Inactivity terminates in a real Incapacity. The like Effect may alſo, in other Inſtances, be owing to the quite contrary Cauſe; for We ſometimes obſerve with Concern the ſeemingly firmeſt Conſtitutions totally enfeebled, or the brighteſt Faculties irrecoverably diſordered, by an exceſſive Intenſeneſs of Application. And, where neither of theſe Extremes can be directly charged with the melancholy Change, the Supreme Diſpoſer of all Things on ſome Occaſions thinks fit (for Reaſons always wiſe, tho' not always diſcernible by Us) to [b] *pour Contempt upon the Mighty* by *weakening their* bodily *Strength*; or to *take away the Heart of the Chief of the Earth* in Intellectual Endowments, *cauſing them* (if I may uſe Holy *Job*'s Expreſſion) *to wander in a Wilderneſs, where there is no Way.* But, without pretending to diſtinguiſh the ſeveral Cauſes of ſuch affecting Appearances, their Influence, in relation to every material Buſineſs of Life, is well known; and is ſurely a perpetual Call upon us to *Remember our Creator* and to *finiſh*

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[a] Prov. XIX. 15. [b] Job XII. 21, 24.

His Works; while the evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, when We ſhall ſay, "*We have no Pleaſure in them.*"

Eſpecially ſince farther, with regard to our principal Work, We have ſtrong Intimations; that there is an *accepted Time, a Day of Salvation;* which may be cloſed before the Cloſe of Life, or even the Loſs of Natural Faculties. Not that ſincere Repentance and real Reformation will ever come too late for Acceptance. [a] *When the Wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedneſs, that he hath committed, and Doeth that which is lawful and right;* We may pronounce upon the higheſt Authority, that *He ſhall ſave his Soul alive.* But we have no Authority to pronounce, that *They may,* at Pleaſure, *Do Good, who have been accuſtomed to Do Evil:* Or, that ſuch as have long been *ſinning wilfully* ſhall preſently be *renewed again unto Repentance,* upon their vouchſafing to caſt a Thought that way. Reaſoning by Analogy from ſimilar Caſes leads us toward a different Concluſion. We ſee almoſt daily Examples, wherein mere Sorrow, and even ardent Wiſhes, nay real Endeavours, are found inſufficient to repair a Man's Fortune, or to reſtore his Health, when once waſted and deſtroyed by Riot and Ex-

[a] Ezek. XVIII. 27.

travagance. And, if ſuch Methods are thus unable to ſet all right in Men's Temporal Concerns; What wiſe Man would reduce himſelf to a Neceſſity of trying their Succeſs in an Affair of infinitely greater Moment; or of relying on their Efficacy, not only for removing all the Conſequences of a Life of Sin, but for ſecuring the Rewards of a Life of Holineſs? The Truth is, Repentance itſelf is no ſuch eaſy Matter as ſeems to be too commonly ſuppoſed. The Completion of it at leaſt, if not the firſt Motion towards it, is certainly *the Gift of GOD*. And, how can the habitual Sinner preſume, that *the Spirit of GOD ſhould always ſtrive with* Him? Why ſhould he not rather apprehend, that the Time may ſoon come, when, though he ſhould become [a] *willing to inherit the Bleſſing* he hath *profanely deſpiſed*, his Pretenſions ſhall be *rejected?* not becauſe real Repentance would even then be unavailable, ſuppoſing him capable of it; but becauſe he ſhall then *find no Place of Repentance, tho' he* ſhould *cry for it earneſtly with Tears.*

Upon the Whole. We are ſent into Life by our great Creator: Upon an Errand of indiſpenſable Neceſſity: To be accompliſhed, if at all, within a Space of Time, ſhort at beſt, and yet uncertain alſo; not only in reſpect of its Continuance, but of our Ability to make a proper Uſe of it.---What remains then, but that, agreeably to our LORD's Declaration in my *Text*, and to the *laſt* Obſervation above deduced from it,

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[a] Comp. Heb. XII. 17. with Gen. XXVII.

V. We ſhould, All of Us, reſolve to proſecute This Great Buſineſs *while it is Day*; *leſt the Night* ſhould overtake us, before our Work be finiſhed.

Could the Night of Death juſtly be conſidered as the Period, not of our Working only, but of our very Being; the Libertine's Concluſion, "*Let us Eat and Drink*," unmanly as it is, would hardly be more unmanly than his Principle, "*To-morrow We Dye.*" But, in how very different a Light muſt the Certainty and Nearneſs of Death appear, when an ETERNITY of Happineſs or Miſery is underſtood to depend upon the Life preceding it.--If We All dye only to live again: If the *Night* of Death is to be ſucceeded by a *new Day*, *whoſe Sun ſhall no more go down*: If, after our Bodies have *ſlept in the Duſt*, We muſt All *awake*; *Some to everlaſting Life* and Glory, *and Some to Shame and everlaſting Contempt*: If, once more, We muſt then be irreverſibly ſentenced to the One or the Other of theſe moſt oppoſite Conditions, from the Character We ſhall by an unerring Judge be found to have ſuſtained here, either of *faithful Stewards* or of *unprofitable Servants:* Who can expreſs the Infatuation of *conſuming* thoſe *Years in Vanity*, or of drowning in Senſuality thoſe Faculties; by our Application of which our Situation muſt be determined, in a Life endleſs and a State unchangeable!

Let us think betimes, how amazing the Approach of Death muſt appear --- far more amazing than the Approach of Night to an improvident *Traveller*, who has a great Part of his laborious but neceſſary Day's Journey ſtill to be performed ---*ſhould* the Buſineſs of our Lives prove *then* unfiniſhed; but eſpecially, ſhould it hardly be well begun. In our early Years, indeed, while the Circulations are free, and the Spirits briſk, Time may glide along with tolerable Smoothneſs in a Courſe of unthinking Gayety. The *Young Man* may *rejoice in his Youth, and let his Heart chear him: He may*, for ſome Time, *walk in the Ways of his Heart, and in the Sight of his Eyes*; indulging himſelf without Reſerve in the Gratification of every Senſe and Appetite. But--*the Voice of the LORD GOD* will be *heard in the Cool of the Day:* And, when the Remonſtrances of Conſcience begin to force themſelves upon him; what muſt his *Searchings of Heart* be! whether he looks back upon a World, out of which he is juſt going, without having ſeriouſly engaged in *any one Work* for which he was *ſent* into it; or whether he looks forward into Another, upon which he is juſt entering, without having provided *any one* requiſite *Qualification* for it; and in which he muſt *know, that for all Theſe Things*, all the Hours he has trifled away, all the Talents he has miſemployed, *GOD will bring him to Judgment!*

Or ſuppoſing, what is at all Times poſſible, at no Time improbable, that the *King of Terrours*, inſtead of making leiſurely Advances, and notifying his Approach, ſhould unawares ſeize the *Strong Man and overcome him*: Should the worthleſs Voluptuary's *Soul be this Night required of* him, or he be deprived of that Underſtanding, which he hath ſo wretchedly miſuſed: Under how much greater Aſtoniſhment muſt be awake in the *World of Spirits*, an entire *Stranger* as he is to Spiritual *Joys*, and utterly incapable of *intermeddling with*, or bearing any Part in *them!* What Heart can conceive the Anguiſh, with which the Man of Wit and Parts, or of Wealth and Dignity, after a Life of Indolence and Inſignificancy, eſpecially if alſo of Lewdneſs and Impiety, *ſhall ſee* the induſtrious Peaſant whom he hath perhaps oppreſſed, or the plodding Student whom he hath probably held in Contempt, *ſitting down hereafter in the Kingdom of Heaven, and himſelf* for ever *thruſt out!*

Whereas, on the other Hand, in the *Evening* of a Life ſpent in *Doing his LORD's Will*, with what Serenity may be the faithful Servant *wait for His Coming*; in conſtant Readineſs to *open to Him immediately*, and in humble Confidence that *his Reward is with Him, and his Work before Him.* In other Inſtances, it may be ſome little Diſcouragement to Induſtry, to obſerve the Succeſs of Men's Labours not always anſwerable to the Conſtancy of them. Diſappointments of this Sort muſt often happen in *wordly* Purſuits; where, of *Many that may run, but One can* ordinarily *receive the Prize.* But, in the great *Race that is ſet before Us* Chriſtians, the Caſe is far otherwiſe. We may *here* be Competitors without Interference; and, though We *All run*, We may *each* of Us *obtain.* --- We ſerve a Maſter, by whom well-meaning Merit (and with Him ſincere Endeavours are *accepted for* Merit) *ſhall not always be forgotten*; And *in whoſe Work* if We are but

ſteadfaſt

[a] *ſteadfaſt and unmoveable,* and to the beſt of our Abilities *always abounding, our Labour* ſhall, in no Degree of it, finally be *in vain.* Let us [b] *work our Work betimes; and in His Time He,* by whom We are employed, *will* aſſuredly *give Us our* full *Reward.*

I have only to add, what muſt not be omitted in treating this Subject, that *our own Strength is ſmall:* So ſmall, as to be of itſelf utterly diſproportioned either to the Difficulty of the Work, or the Excellency of the Reward, propoſed to us. In Truth, [c] *it is GOD that worketh in us, both to Will and to Do, of His Good Pleaſure.* But then, ſince it is always His Good Pleaſure to aſſiſt as well as to *reward them that diligently ſeek Him*; ſo far ſhould the foregoing Reflection be from damping our Reſolution, or excuſing our Inactivity, that it is at once a moſt awful and moſt animating Incitement to *work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling.*

If Any of You, then, *lack Wiſdom, let him aſk of GOD:* To HIM let us All apply ourſelves for Guidance and Support through this arduous Undertaking: Humbly beſeeching Him, that He would *turn away our Eyes, leſt* with Appetite or Eagerneſs *they behold Vani-*

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[a] 1 Cor. XV. 58. [b] Eccluſ. LI. 30. [c] Phil. II. 12, 13.

ty, and quicken us in His Way: That he would *ſtrengthen our Hands,* and *proſper the Work of them:* That, in *this Place* more eſpecially, He would ſanctify all our Studies, to the Attainment of that *Knowledge,* not which *puffeth up one againſt another,* but which *maketh charitable* to the *Edifying* of our Brethren, and *wiſe unto* our own *Salvation:* That *all our Works* may be *begun, continued, and ended in* Him: And that at length, when *the Time of our Departure is at hand,* We may, by His Mercy overlooking whatever hath been amiſs in us, and through the Merits of our Redeemer ſupplying what is wanting on our Parts, Each of us be able to addreſs Him, in the Words of the ſame His well-beloved Son: [a] “*I have glorified Thee on the Earth: I have* “*finiſhed the* WORK, *which* THOU *gaveſt Me* “*to Do!*”

A
SERMON

Preached before the

UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD*,

At St. *MARY*'s CHURCH,

On *Friday*, *February* 17. 1758.

Being a Day appointed, by Royal Proclamation,
to be kept as a General FAST, on Occaſion
of the preſent WAR againſt *FRANCE*.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of Mr. VICE-CHANCELLOR and the HEADS of HOUSES.

[redacted]

I S A I A H XLII. 24.

Who gave Jacob *for a Spoil, and* Iſrael *to the Robbers? Did not the* LORD, *He, againſt whom we have ſinned?*

AMONG many important Advantages remommending the inſpired Writings of the Old as well as the New Teſtament to our attentive Peruſal, This is none of the leaſt conſiderable; That, whilſt they preſent us with an *Hiſtory* of Providence in ancient Times, they abound with *Obſervations* upon particular Occurrences which may be uſefully *applied* by all ſucceeding Ages. Erroneous Applications indeed may be, and have been, made of ſome Tranſactions there recorded, relating to *a peculiar People*: where neither ſhould every Interpoſition on GOD's Part be an Object of general Expectation, nor every Proceeding on Their's be drawn into general Example. Yet the Accounts there given of many remarkable

Changes in the Fortunes of that People, eſpecially where we have the Declarations of their *Prophets and Righteous Men* concerning them, were undoubtedly *written for our Learning*. And, as God *is not the* God *of the* Jews *only, but of the Gentiles alſo*; ſuch Paſſages of *Scripture* may, at this Day, be *profitable* to other Nations, *for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs*.

I wiſh we had leſs Occaſion thus to apply the Paſſage before Us, in reference either to the *Injuries* we have lately been permitted by the Almighty to ſuffer from the Invaders of our National Rights, or to the *Provocation* we have given Him to chaſtiſe us by their Means. However, of our paſt Sufferings, or our preſent Dangers, let every one judge as he ſees Cauſe; provided only that he judge impartially and in the Fear of God. For we may be, and perhaps we ſometimes are, ready to think too unfavourably of the Circumſtances of our Country; and, though not to be *afraid where no Fear is*, yet to be afraid beyond what our Caſe really requires: Which may be at once our Misfortune and our Fault: Our Misfortune, ſhould it *betray thoſe Succours which Reaſon* might otherwiſe *offer*: Our Fault, ſhould it make us unreaſonably querelous againſt our Superiours, or too raſh in our Cenſures upon our Country-men; but eſpecially ſhould it render us leſs thankful than we ought to be to our ſupreme Protector, for having hitherto exempted Us of this Land, if not from bearing a Share in the Burdens of War, yet from perſonally feeling Thoſe direful Effects of it, under which Many Others even now groan. But, though our Situation may not yet be deſperate enough to juſtify an unmanly Dread, it is ſurely too alarming to excuſe an irreligious Security. A State of War with a powerful Enemy cannot, under the moſt favourable Appearances, be free from Danger. And, if we find our Prophet elſewhere denouncing a [a] *Wo* againſt Some in his Days, who appear not 'till afterwards to have ſmarted under any extraordinary Chaſtiſement, becauſe *the Harp and the Viol, the Tabret and Pipe, and Wine, were in their Feaſts*, whilſt *they regarded not the Work of the* LORD, *nor conſidered the Operation of His Hands*; how much more provoking muſt the ſame luxurious and profane Courſe of Life be under the actual Inflictions of his Vengeance. That War in particular is one of theſe Inflictions, and ſuch an one as calls for a more ſerious

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[a] Iſai. V. 11, 12.

Frame of Mind, we may (without citing other Paſſages) ſufficiently learn from the Words following my Text: Where the *Prophet*, having intimated the Reaſon why God had *given* Jacob *for a Spoil and* Iſrael *to the Robbers*, preſently ſubjoins this pathetick Complaint: [a] *Therefore hath He poured upon him the Fury of His Anger, and the Strength of Battle; and It hath ſet him on Fire round about, yet he knew* (or duly regarded) *it not; and It hath burned him, yet he laid it not to Heart.* A Degree of Inſenſibility, which might ſeem hardly credible, did not our own Obſervation ſet before us too many Examples of at leaſt an equal Inattention to the ſame Indications of Divine Diſpleaſure.

To awaken Us from a State of Slumber and Impiety, ſo little agreeable to our preſent Circumſtances, is one declared End of this ſeaſonable Appointment: In Purſuance whereof, I would take Occaſion, from the Paſſage under Conſideration, to offer ſome Reflections not unſuitable to the State of Things around Us; and then to recommend ſuch farther Sentiments as Seaſons of National Danger ſtand in need of, and ſuch as Days of National Humiliation more particularly require.

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[a] Iſai. XLII. 25.

Many a Time had *the Enemies* of GOD's People *oppreſſed them and held them in Subjection.* And, whichſoever of their Diſtreſſes the *Prophet* might in my *Text* particularly have in view; We may ſuppoſe *Them* full of Enquiries after the immediate Cauſe of what had befallen them; blaming, as their Apprehenſions or their Prejudices led them, either the Direction of their Counſels, or the Execution of their Operations: not without loud Complaints and Expreſſions of Reſentment againſt the Encroachments, Perfidy, and Cruelty of Their Enemies. The Prophet condemns not ſuch Enquiries nor ſuch Complaints; but from their acknowledged Condition takes Occaſion to point out to them ſuch Objects of *Both*, as were at leaſt equally intereſting with any of the reſt: Of their *Enquiries* — "*Who* had *let looſe* the Violence of their rapacious Adverſaries, at the ſame Time (if ſuch a Caſe muſt be ſuppoſed) infatuating or diſpiriting Thoſe that ſhould have defended them?" And of their *Reſentment* — Thoſe Perſonal Sins, Thoſe National Provocations, that had deprived them of His Protection. *Who* GAVE Jacob *for a Spoil, and* Iſrael *to the Robbers? Did not the* LORD, *He, againſt whom we have* SINNED?

Such, I conceive, might be the View of our Prophet in This Addreſs to his Countrymen. And, ſhould our preſent Circumſtances be thought to bear any Reſemblance to Their's; That we may neither on the one Hand, like Them, by a ſottiſh Diſregard of His Super-intendence *forget* God, nor *charge Him fooliſhly* by any injurious Imputation on the other; I ſhall reduce what the Time will permit me to offer, by Way of illuſtrating and applying the Doctrine of my Text, under the following General Heads of Enquiry:

I. *Firſt, Whence it comes,* that there ſhould be among Men or Nations any ſuch *Violence,* as is here ſuppoſed.

II. *Secondly, under whoſe Controll,* and *to what Ends,* It is permitted to operate, or produce Its Effects. And,

III. *Thirdly, To what Uſes* the foregoing Doctrine may be *ſeaſonably applied* by Ourſelves, on the preſent Occaſion.

I. The *Firſt* of Theſe Enquiries, as it relates to the *Origin of Evil in general,* hath in all Ages been a Subject of much Perplexity to Man's unenlightened Underſtanding: And it ſtill continues to be a dangerous Speculation to ſuch *Free Enquirers*, as will preſume to be *Wiſe above what is written.* But I have the Happineſs of ſpeaking to a *Chriſtian* Audience: And as no Apology will here be expected for having conſtant Recourſe to That ſacred Volume, which is in all our Hands; ſo we ſhall, I truſt, be thereby enabled to reconcile, ſo far as it is needful for *Us* to reconcile, the Appearances now under Conſideration, with the genuine Feelings of our own Nature, and with our cleareſt Notions concerning the All-perfect Author of It.

The Fact ſuppoſed is indeed indiſputable: There always hath been, and there ſtill continues to be, much Injuſtice, Rapine, and Cruelty in the World. Scarcely was the Human Race multiplied before Aſſaſſination began: For the Firſt Man, whoſe Birth is recorded, is recorded alſo to have [a] *riſen up againſt his Brother and* to have *ſlain him.* When in Proceſs of Time this *Earth* became repleniſhed with Inhabitants, we are told, that it [b] *was alſo filled with Violence:* Nor could the ſame *Flood of Waters*, which ſwept away the *Old World* one Family excepted, through any conſiderable Length of Succeſſion deter the Branches of That one Family from mutual

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[a] Gen. IV. 8. [b] Ibid. VI. 13.

Encroachments, Aſſaults, and Bloodſhed. Their Deſcendants ever ſince, when at Liberty from all Reſtraints of Authority, have betrayed ſuch a Diſpoſition to annoy and infeſt one another, as furniſhed a *Philoſophizing Humoriſt* of our own in the laſt Century with ſome Pretence for his favorite Tenet, that *a State of Nature is a State of War*. Yet, on the other Hand, the Hiſtories of Mankind, under *Government* in every Form, are filled with Accounts ſo little to Its Credit, that a late *plauſible Declaimer* hath ventured to charge This *Artificial Society* with the Introduction of more and greater Miſchiefs among Men, than Thoſe from which It has reſcued them. As to our boaſted Faculty of *Reaſon*; too true it is, that, in Proportion to Its Improvement by the Cultivation of Arts and Sciences, Men have ever become more ingenious in *preparing for* each other *the Inſtruments of Death*. Nay (which is moſt to be lamented) *Religion* Itſelf hath too often been employed in giving Sharpneſs to Thoſe Weapons, and Force to thoſe Engines, which Philoſophy had invented for the Deſtruction of our Species. Even the merciful [a] JESUS foreſaw and foretold, that *His Coming*, inſtead of cloſing former Breaches, would Itſelf open new Ones among thoſe of neareſt Relation. Which Prediction the Profeſſors of His Religion have ever ſince been too ſadly verifying: And We ſee, at This Day, Some, who call themſelves CHRISTIANS, ſpreading Devaſtations with as much Induſtry, as if They were really ſupporting their Title to That Appellation by *Sending on Earth, not Peace, but a Sword.*

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[a] Matt. X. 34, 35.

What ſhall We ſay then? Are our truly Natural Affections and our unprejudiced Reaſon, are Civil Government and even Religion, not excepting the Chriſtian, All combined againſt the Peace, and Order, and Happineſs of Mankind? In other Words, *Is* GOD *the Author of* ſo much *Confuſion* as we ſee in the *Moral* World? Or, Are His choiceſt Gifts to Man the *neceſſary Cauſes* of all This Miſchief and Deſtruction? No, ſurely! Whatever *Inventions Men may have ſought out*, let us ſay, with the *Wiſe Preacher*, [a] "*This at leaſt we* "*have found, that* GOD *made Man upright?*" He gave him a Degree of Perfection ſuited to his Rank among his Fellow-Creatures; but ſuited alſo to That State of Probation for which he was intended. What his *Firſt* Trial was, and how he fell from his *Original* Uprightneſs, You all know from the [a] Hiſtory of *Moſes*. And, if we conſult St. *James* upon the Origin of [b] *bitter Envying and Strife* in particular; we find Him, not only tracing Its *Deſcent* from the Frailty of our *Earthly* Part, the Prevalence of our *Senſual* Appetites, and the Influence of That *Diabolical* Spirit, whoſe Suggeſtions firſt introduced this Diſorder into our Conſtitution, and ſtill continue to add Strength and Malignity to it; but expreſly aſſuring Us, that *the Wiſdom, which is from above, is firſt pure then peaceable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated, full of Mercy, and good Fruits.*

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[a] Eccl. VII. 29.

And indeed, depraved as our preſent Nature is, I think we ſhould hardly do Juſtice to the Author of our Being, ſhould We not acknowledge Ourſelves to be, in every Way conſiſtent with the Freedom of accountable Creatures, *taught of* GOD *to love one another.* "*Do Violence to no Man,*" is ſtill a Dictate of Nature, as well as a Precept of Religion. Our very Inſtincts are, as it were, retained on the Side of Diſtreſs, whereſoever it appears; at leaſt 'till they are hurt by a Number of detected Counterfeits. A *State of War* is in fact ſo little *Natural* to our Minds, that to be pleaſed with the Miſeries of others, or wilfully to

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b See Gen. III. b Jam. III. 14.—17.

occaſion them, I might ſay, to neglect the Relief of them when in our Power, is not more commonly than juſtly called "*Inhuman*:" And I appeal to every Breaſt not unuſually hardened, Whether, *in the Midſt of* Its *Rejoicing* upon the News of a Victory, *the Heart* *is* not *ſorrowful* at the Thought of That horrible Slaughter, even of Enemies, that muſt be ſuppoſed to have attended upon it. Then, as to *Civil Government*: So far is This from being fairly chargeable with the mutual Encroachments and Inſults of Men, that it was one great End of This *Ordinance of* GOD, and is one principal Employment of All who duly adminiſter It, by hindering if poſſible, or if not by puniſhing, every Thing of this Kind, to proclaim to Thoſe under Its Juriſdiction, *that They truſt not in Wrong and Robbery*. And, whatever Outrages may at any Time have ſheltered themſelves under the miſapplied Name of *Religion*, or have perhaps been conſecrated by the much-injured Authority of the *Goſpel* Itſelf; *Theſe* muſt all have been prevented by a right Underſtanding, and due Obſervance, of That amiable Inſtitution; whoſe Divine Author [a] *came, not to deſtroy Men's Lives, but to ſave them*: Which hath opened to our Faith ſuch Views of Happineſs hereafter, as well as preſcribed ſuch Rules for our Conduct here, as are moſt admirably calculated to promote *Peace on Earth* and *Good-Will among Men:* And, were it but allowed to have *Its perfect Work,* [a] *Nation would not lift up Sword againſt Nation, neither would They* need to *learn War any more.*

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[a] Luke IX. 56.

Not that ſuch Appeals to the Arbitration of Heaven are abſolutely repugnant either to Reaſon or Chriſtianity. Nations, as well as Families or ſingle Perſons, may have Rights too important to be given up without a vigorous Oppoſition to the unjuſt Invader: And ſuch, I truſt, are the Rights, in Vindication whereof our own Nation is at preſent engaged. Self-defence, on ſuch Occaſions, is not only juſtifiable but a Duty; and is indeed then only blameable, when Hoſtilities commence before Provocation has been given, or are proſecuted by Methods unwarrantable, or are puſhed beyond the Bounds of a juſt Reparation for paſt Injuries, and a reaſonable Precaution againſt future Attempts of the ſame Kind. Something, however, is generally wrong in the One or the Other of the contending Parties; and too often in Both. And, when the

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[a] Iſai. II. 4.

Sword is once drawn, ſo extremely difficult is it, if not impoſſible, to guard againſt Exceſſes, or to prevent a Train of Conſequences, too many to be enumerated, too ſhocking to be deſcribed; that no good Man would willingly be concerned in the *Beginning of* ſuch *Strife*, no juſt Nation would without *good Advice make War:* Nor can we ſuppoſe ourſelves ſo conſtituted by our Wiſe Creator, as to render ſuch Havock among His own Works unavoidable.

[a] *From whence*, then, *come Wars and Fightings among* us? The ſame Apoſtle, who propoſeth the Queſtion, hath very emphatically anſwered it by another, *Come They not hence, even of Your Luſts that war in Your Members?* And here, in fact, is the chief Source of that Rapine, for which a Stranger to the Ways of Men might well be at a Loſs to aſſign a Temptation. The Produce of This Earth when properly cultivated, and the Bounties of Heaven when moderately enjoyed, ſeem abundantly ſufficient for the needful Support, the comfortable Accommodation, of All for whom They are prepared. But, though the original Deſires, the natural Wants, of Man are few and eaſily ſupplied, his ima-

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[a] Jam. IV. 1.

ginary or affected ones, growing in proportion with indulged Appetites and enflamed Luſts, ſoon become numerous and importunate. Hence, in private Life, *He that maketh Haſte to be Rich* or Great, *can hardly be innocent:* Harmleſs Behaviour will not anſwer his Purpoſe: Meeting with Many engaged in the ſame Purſuits, he finds, or fancies that he finds, a Neceſſity for employing either inſidious Craft or over-bearing Vehemence; 'till unmoved by Compaſſion, unawed by Scruples, he conſiders Nothing as hurtful to another that promiſeth Advantage to himſelf. And hence alſo, no ſooner do States and Kingdoms begin to form Projects of extending their Fame, their Commerce, or their Conqueſts; no ſooner do their Sovereigns affect the Titles of Grand and Invincible; but the tender Sentiments of Humanity are made to give Way, nay perſonal Safety and even true Policy are ſacrificed, to their ambitious and unbounded Deſires. The Lives, not of Enemies only, but of Subjects, are eſtimated ſolely according to their Subſerviency to this favourite Paſſion: Whilſt every Nation that preſumes to check their Progreſs, though in Its own juſt Defence, muſt expect to feel the keeneſt Reſentment of Thoſe, who have perſuaded themſelves, that *They are to be placed Alone in the Earth.*

What hath been here ſaid amounts to This; [a] *All that is in the World*—All that Violence of Paſſion whoſe pernicious Effects we ſee and lament in it—*The Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, is not of the Father, but is of the World.* It is not That reaſonable Love of Ourſelves or of our Country, which is agreeable to our Nature or implanted in us by Its Author, that produces Thoſe Miſchiefs we are here conſidering; But it is That irregular, exceſſive, indeed unnatural, Kind of it, which, not content with an equitable Share of the Pleaſures, the Profits, or the Pre-eminences of our preſent State, would if poſſible graſp and engroſs the Whole. [b] *Let no Man,* then, let no Community of Men, *when tempted* to commit Wrong or Violence, *ſay, "I am tempted of* GOD:" *For* GOD *cannot be tempted of Evil, neither tempteth He any Man: But every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Luſt and enticed. Then Luſt, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth Sin; and Sin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth Death.*

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[a] 1 Joh. II. 16. [b] Jam. I. 13—15.

Should it, after all, be here urged (and, in an Age of Doubting, what will not be urged?) that as Infinite Knowledge could not but foreſee, ſo we might have expected from Infinite Goodneſs that It would have prevented, all Thoſe Exorbitances of Paſſion which produce ſo much Miſchief among Men: Not to detain You with any abſtruſe Diſquiſitions, how far Divine Wiſdom might, or might not, have prevented every Thing of this Kind, without admitting ſome greater Defect or Inconvenience in ſome other Way: (Diſquiſitions, on this Occaſion at leaſt unſeaſonable, perhaps on no Occaſion to be reſolved with Certainty, or even purſued with Innocence:) Let us ſee, Whether the Difficulty before us may not be competently cleared up, by enquiring, as was propoſed,

II. *Secondly, Under whoſe Controll,* and *to what Ends,* the Violence of human Paſſion is permitted to produce Its Effects.

Of the various Hypotheſes, that have lately been propoſed, concerning the *Deſign* of the Book of *Job,* One (You know) repreſents the principal Scope of It to have been the early Condemnation of the ancient Notion of *Two* not only diſtinct but *independent Principles,* the

One of *Good*, the Other of *Evil*. And, ſurely, whatever may be thought of the main Deſign of the Book Itſelf, ſuch a Notion could hardly have been more emphatically diſcountenanced than it *there* is: Where the [a] *Evil Being* is introduced, full of Envy againſt the Holy Man, at once for his *Uprightneſs* and his Proſperity, and eagerly bent upon putting an End to Both; yet unable to make him *ſin with his Lips*, or without GOD's Permiſſion to touch the leaſt Part of his Poſſeſſions. Whilſt, on the other Hand, the *Good Being*, though He authorizes the Adverſary for a Time to exerciſe His faithful Servant with grievous Afflictions; at length *brings Good out of* This *Evil*, not only to Others by exhibiting ſo illuſtrious an Example of Patience and Integrity, but to *Job* himſelf by [b] *bleſſing his latter End more than his Beginning*.

And, if we conſider the ſame envious *Spirit* as ſtill *working in the Children of Diſobedience*; we ſhall find the foregoing Repreſentation conformable to the whole Tenour of the ſacred Writings: Which have rendered our Sentiments of GOD's Super-intending Providence, with regard particularly to the *Evils* that appear in the *Moral* World, more awful and more worthy of His righteous Government, than had ever otherwiſe been conceived by Mankind.

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[a] Job I. and II.

[b] Job XLII.

Give me Leave to illuſtrate This Point by an Inſtance or Two. --- Very unnatural was the Hatred of [a] *the Sons of Jacob* againſt their innocent Brother *Joſeph*: Nor was the Cruelty much leſſened on *their* Part, when They quitted their firſt Scheme of Shedding his Blood for That of Selling him into Slavery. But, while the Envy and Malice were Their's, the Event was GOD's. And, when, by a wonderful Reverſe of their reſpective Fortunes, *Joſeph* in his turn found Theſe his Brethren at his Mercy; it was from a Strain, not of affected Tenderneſs, but of rational Piety, that He thus accoſted them: [b] "GOD *did ſend me before You, to preſerve Life: It was not Ye, that ſent me hither, but* GOD.--- [c] *As for You, Ye thought Evil againſt me; but* GOD *meant it unto Good.* Thus again: Equally undeſerved was the Violence of the *Jews* againſt our Bleſſed LORD, and carried to a yet greater Length by Them. And yet we are warranted in ſaying, that the Hand of GOD was in This Tranſaction alſo: So far in it, as that neither His Judge nor His Murtherers

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[a] Gen. XXXVII. [b] Ibid. XLV. 5, 8. [c] Ibid. L. 20.

therers could [a] *have had any Power at all againſt Him, except it had been given them from above. He was* indeed by their own voluntary Act [b] *taken, and by* their *wicked Hands crucified and ſlain:* But *He* was firſt *delivered* into Thoſe Hands *by the determinate Counſel and Foreknowledge of* God: And, whilſt [c] *both* Herod *and* Pontius Pilate, *with the Gentiles and People of* Iſrael *were gathered together againſt His holy Child* Jesus; They were in fact executing, though quite beſides their own Intention, *what His Hand and His Counſel had,* with a far more gracious Purpoſe, *determined before to be done.*--The ſame is obſervable, more directly to the Point before us, in regard to the Sufferings of *Kingdoms* from oppreſſive and cruel Enemies: Which latter are conſtantly repreſented as Executioners of the Almighty's Orders; to be reſtrained or employed, and afterwards themſelves puniſhed, according to His good Pleaſure. Paſſionately deſirous as [d] *Balaam* was of the *Wages of Unrighteouſneſs,* and eager to earn them by *Curſing* Iſrael; He was too experienced to imagine *he could go beyond the Word of the* Lord, *to do leſs or more:* And when, notwithſtanding This, he was wicked enough to make repeated Experiments; to the inexpreſſible Diſappointment of a Prince, who would have amply rewarded him, he found himſelf under a Neceſſity of declaring, "*Surely, there is no Enchantment againſt* Jacob, *neither is there any Divination againſt* Iſrael." Not ſo, when God's Government called for a different Proceeding. Then, *He gave* Jacob *for a Spoil, and* Iſrael *to the Robbers*: He then withdrew His Protection, and left them to the Avarice, the Malice, or the Revenge of their Enemies: in the Prophetick Language, [a] *calling a ravenous Bird out of the Eaſt, and him that was to execute His Counſel from a far Country*; uſing the *Aſſyrian* in particular for *the Rod of His Anger, and giving him a Charge againſt the People of His Wrath; to take the Spoil, and to take the Prey, and to tread them down as the Mire in the Streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not ſo, neither doth his Heart think ſo*: Little is he aware whoſe Work he is doing, while he is following the Impulſe of his own furious Paſſions; and while *it is in his Heart* only to *deſtroy and cut off Nations not a Few.*

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[a] Joh. XIX. 11. [b] Acts II. 23. [c] Ibid. V. 27, 28. [d] Numb. XXII. &c.

From the foregoing Examples, to which many more might be added, we learn, that wicked Men and wicked Princes are really

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[a] Iſai. XLVI. 11. and X. 5, 6, 7.

Inſtruments of GOD's Governing Providence. Not that He *makes* them cruel, or *needs* their Cruelties. He could *Do His ſtrange Work* of Vengeance by ſavage Creatures of other Kinds: But, as there are not wanting in human Shape ſuch as are always ready with His Permiſſion to undertake it; He ſometimes thinks fit to allow them an Employment ſuited to Their Inclinations, and in which He has a Right to make Uſe of them: Thus, though they will not be *obedient*, rendering them *ſubſervient*, to His Will; and even, while They imagine themſelves to be carrying ſome favourite Point of their Ambition or Revenge, in fact conducting their Operations to the Accompliſhment of His own wiſe and great and good Deſigns.

"*What Thoſe Deſigns may be,*" is a Branch of This Enquiry, which muſt, in *particular* Inſtances, be entered upon with Modeſty, and reſolved with Caution: Becauſe the Reaſons of GOD's Proceedings muſt, oftentimes at leaſt, lie far beyond the Reach of our Penetration. In our *general* Enquiries, however, we may proceed with more Safety; taking the ſame lively Oracles, which have hitherto directed us, for our farther Guides. And, as Theſe have enabled us to clear the Almighty from the Imputation of being the

Author of Man's Violence, while they have taught us to conſider Him as the conſtant Controller and ſupreme Director of all its Effects; ſo will they juſtify us in aſſigning ſome of the chief *Purpoſes*, for which He frequently permits it to prevail in the World.

And here, it muſt be obſerved, that the ſacred Writings often refer us to God's *own Glory* as His principal *End* in the Diſpenſation before us. By which, however, cannot be meant any real Acceſſion to His Eſſential Glory; the tranſcendent Excellency of which muſt ever be incapable of Augmentation; but only the Manifeſtation of His glorious Perfections to ſuch of His Creatures, as He hath enabled to contemplate and adore them. And thus, I conceive, we are to underſtand what He ſaid unto *Pharaoh*. [a] *In very Deed for this Cauſe have I raiſed Thee up, for to ſhew in Thee my Power, and that my Name might be declared throughout all the Earth.* *Pharaoh*'s Heart would probably have been no better diſpoſed in a lower Station, though perhaps not ſo thoroughly *hardened* had he been ſooner cut off. But then, neither could his Oppreſſion of God's People have been ſo extenſive in a narrower Sphere, nor his Oppoſition to God's Authority ſo notorious under fewer Plagues; neither would the Almighty have *gotten Himſelf* ſo much *Honour in the Sight of all Nations* by his unparalleled Overthrow, had not his Life been for ſome Time *continued* under ſuch Corrections as, when long repeated, ſtill more and more *harden* Thoſe *Hearts*, which they cannot penetrate. And (without multiplying Inſtances to the ſame Purpoſe) how greatly muſt ſuch a View of GOD's Government enlarge and exalt our Sentiments of His Power, Majeſty, and excellent Greatneſs! Whom all Nature obeys! *Who* not only *ſtilleth the Raging of the Sea and the Noiſe of Its Waves*, but *ſetteth Bounds to the Fury of the Enemy and the Avenger!* Nay, Who can let looſe all Theſe, ſtill directing their Activity to the Advancement of His own Honour, and *making* even the *Fierceneſs of Man to turn to his Praiſe.* -- Happy will it be for Us, if His late Chaſtiſements, inflicted by the Hands of our encroaching Neighbours, ſhall effectually engage us to *give* That *Glory to Him* by a willing Obedience, which He will be ſure to receive from us and all Mankind, ſooner or later, whether we will or not.

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[a] Exod. IX. 16 and Rom. IX. 17.

For, a *Farther* declared Purpoſe of the Diſpenſation we are conſidering, (rather indeed comprehended under the former, than really ſeparate from it,) is the Trial and Improvement, or at leaſt the Preſervation, of *Their* Virtue and Obedience, whom God is pleaſed to *exerciſe thereby*. That Oppreſſion and Violence are often permitted to take Place, by Way of ſalutary Diſcipline to Individuals, the inſpired Writings will not ſuffer us to doubt: And we have the ſame Authority for believing, that whole Countries are ſometimes given up to the Ravages of other Countries with the like View. --- The ſame *Holy Arm*, which drove out ſo many of the idolatrous Nations of *Canaan*, could as eaſily have extirpated them all, and given His choſen People the uninterrupted Poſſeſſion of That whole Land. Or, Their Almighty Protector could have granted them the ſame *Security* from foreign Invaſions at all Times of the Year, which He encouraged them to rely upon at [a] *three particular Seaſons of it*. But either of theſe Exemptions from preſent Danger would probably ſoon have expoſed them to Conſequences ſtill more dangerous. A *Remnant* therefore of the *Canaanites* was left unſubdued by them; [b] *to be for Scourges in their Sides, and Thorns in their Eyes:* Whilſt, for the Exerciſe of their Vigilance, and Correction of their occaſional

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[a] Exod. XXXIV. 23, 24.

[b] Joſh. XXIII. 13.

Deviations from God's Law, They were expoſed alſo to the Incurſions of more diſtant Plunderers. So that, throughout their Hiſtory, we may obſerve them, by Turns, Diſobeying their Almighty Governour, and Delivered by Him into the Hands of their Enemies; then Brought back by their Diſtreſſes to a Senſe of their Duty, and Received into His Favour, with Its Conſequents, Peace and Proſperity; and even, after having again and again perverted Theſe Bleſſings into Occaſions of Wantonneſs and Rebellion againſt Him, as often Recalled to their Allegiance by the ſame Courſe of Chaſtenings, before they were finally abandoned by Him.

But abandoned at laſt even They were, for their incorrigible Perverſeneſs, to the Fury of the *Roman Legions*; and became a melancholy Inſtance of *One* Purpoſe of Divine Providence that yet remains to be here mentioned (co-incident ſtill with That of God's *Glory)* to which the unbridled Paſſions of Men are ſometimes permitted to be ſubſervient: Namely, that of Taking exemplary Vengeance upon enormous Sinners, and utterly Deſtroying ſuch as have filled up *the Meaſure of their Iniquity*. We may on good Grounds preſume, that ſingle Offenders are in many Inſtances thus puniſhed by the Violence of others. But the Preſumption is much ſtronger in the Caſe of ſinful Communities, *as ſuch*; upon Grounds that have been ſo often explained, as to leave me no Occaſion for any Enlargement on them. And little need I multiply Examples to the ſame Purpoſe, whilſt the ſtill viſible Fate of the *Jews*, of which I have juſt been reminding You, continues at This Day to convey to every Nation under Heaven That awful Warning: "*If* God *ſpared not His choſen People, Take Heed, leſt He alſo ſpare not Thee.*"

In what various Ways the Almighty may enable one Wicked Nation to oppreſs, haraſs, and ruin Another, it is impoſſible for us to ſay, and needleſs to enquire. But there can be no Difficulty in accounting for the Thing itſelf. In Truth, a People impious in their Principles and debauched in their Morals muſt, almoſt of Courſe, fall an eaſy Prey to the firſt Aſſailant. They not only renounce God's Protection and provoke His Reſentment, but naturally diſqualify themſelves for any manly Effort againſt real or even imaginary Terrours. Their Counſels will be ſlow, diſtracted, irreſolute; and probably no ſooner determined than betrayed: Or, inſtead of that Vigour in the Execution which Succeſs ordinarily requires, with trembling Hands and Hearts failing, They will *turn themſelves back in the Day of Battle*, and even *flee when None purſueth*. Their Adverſaries will find ſuch a People ready vanquiſhed to their Hands: No uncommon Share of Policy, or Courage, or Strength need be communicated to them, in order to their ſubduing a Set of Men that have made themſelves ripe for Slavery, and are become *Veſſels of Wrath fitted for Deſtruction*.

May the Caſe, here only ſuppoſed, never be our own! And that it never may, at leaſt by any Fault or Miſconduct on our Part, let us now go on to *enquire*, as was propoſed,

III. *Thirdly*, *To what Uſes* the Conſiderations already offered may be ſeaſonably *applied* on the preſent Occaſion.

The great Doctrine, which I have thus far been illuſtrating, is That of a *Divine Superintendence* over the Proceedings both of ſingle Perſons and publick Communities, more eſpecially in Times of *War*: Such a Super-intendence, as, though It always diſapproves the *Principle* from which Rapine or Cruelty proceeds, yet often permits the *Acts* to take Place, and for a Time to prevail: Such a Super-intendence, however, as retains the

Power of *checking* That Principle, and *controlling* Thoſe Acts, at Pleaſure; and, where It allows them the largeſt Scope, ſtill *directs* their Operations to the Accompliſhment of the Wiſeſt Ends: Particularly, the Manifeſtation of God's Glory, the Exerciſing of a careleſs or Chaſtiſement of a froward People, aud the final Extirpation of Thoſe *that will not have Him to reign over them.*

Now the foregoing Account of God's Providence, like [a] *the Pillar of Fire* in the Paſſage through the Red-Sea, whilſt in the *Night* of Affliction *it is a Cloud and Darkneſs* to His Enemies, *gives Light* and Conſolation to Thoſe, who are ſo wiſe as to put themſelves under His Guidance and Protection. And accordingly, I would beg Leave, as briefly as I well can, to apply the Doctrine before us to the Uſes of *Admonition,* of *Comfort,* and of *Exhortation:* Of Admonition, to the *Unthinking*; of Comfort, to the *Penitent*; of Exhortation, to *All.*

And *Firſt,* Let the careleſs and unthinking be *Admoniſhed* by our late Misfortunes and our preſent Dangers, to *conſider their Ways*; in order to diſcover, as far as we may reaſonably preſume to diſcover, *Why* the great Governour of the Univerſe hath thought fit thus to mortify, and ſtill thinks fit thus to threaten, us.

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[a] Exod. XIV. 20.

Self-Examination, whether *Perſonal* or *National*, is a Work peculiarly ſeaſonable in Times of Suffering: And yet a Work, towards which Thoſe have generally the leaſt Inclination, who have the greateſt Occaſion for it: [a] *I hearkened and heard*, ſaith the Prophet *Jeremiah* at a like Seaſon, *but They ſpake not aright; No Man repented him of his Wickedneſs, ſaying, "What have I done?" Every one turned to his Courſe, as the Horſe ruſheth into the Battle.* Even *the Stork in the Heaven knoweth his appointed Times, and the Turtle and the Crane and the Swallow obſerve the Time of their Coming; but my People know not the Judgment of the* Lord. A dangerous Symptom This; and utterly unworthy of ſuch Creatures, as ought to be *wiſer than the Fowls of Heaven.* For, though it would be preſumptuous and uncharitable, *merely* from the Sight of uncommon perſonal Afflictions or even National Calamities, to condemn the Sufferers as being *Sinners above All others*; Yet ſurely, in either Caſe, it muſt become the Sufferers themſelves to look up to the Author, and to *lay to Heart* the Occaſion and End, of ſuch Diſpenſations. Though other Men's Calamities may not always excuſe us in condemning them; Yet our own Calamities will always juſtify us in *judging Ourſelves.*

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[a] Jer. VIII. 6, 7

In which important Work, however, it will not be expected, that our Civil or Military State, our Landed or Commercial Intereſts, our Foreign or Domeſtick Tranſactions, ſhould be taken into Examination in This *ſacred* Place. Such Enquiries belong to another Conſideration; to which (I am ſure) it is as much my Inclination as it is my Duty to refer them. And, as to our Moral and Religious Condition; though Reflections of That Nature more properly fall within the Buſineſs of *This Day*; yet, I hope, You will the rather excuſe me at preſent from attempting the diſagreeable Operation of laying open the *Wounds and Bruiſes and* too *general Unſoundneſs* of our Country in Theſe reſpects; becauſe *This* hath often, on like Occaſions, been performed by more ſkilful Hands. Let me only be permitted to ſuggeſt, that if the Situation of Publick Affairs ſhould ſeem continually growing more and more critical and dangerous: If ſome important Poſſeſſions of the *Britiſh* Crown, won by the Bravery, nay purchaſed with the Blood, of our renowned Country-men, have lately been, in a Manner afflictive enough, torn from us: If our valuable Colonies have greatly ſuffered, and ſtill continue expoſed to yet farther Suffering, from the Incurſions, the Ravages, the ſavage Cruelties, of our inveterate Enemies: If our Counſels at home have been diſunited and diſconcerted, to the unhappy Loſs of irrecoverable Opportunities; whilſt our Enterprizes abroad have been generally unſucceſsful: If, in Conſequence of all This, our Laws and Government with Difficulty maintain Their wonted Reputation in other Countries, and are daily inſulted by the loweſt of the People in our own: Surely it muſt be high Time to reflect, Whether We are not exemplifying That ſtanding Rule of God's Proceedings,—"[a] *They, that deſpiſe* Me, *ſhall be lightly eſteemed.*"

We find it recorded in the *Jewiſh* Hiſtory, That [b] *the Anger of the* Lord *was hot againſt* Iſrael, *and He delivered them into the Hands of Spoilers that ſpoiled them:—So that They could not any longer ſtand before their Enemies.* The ſacred Hiſtorian has not, indeed, thought fit preciſely to mark out the *Time* of This their diſtreſſed Condition: But He has taken Care, in the Words immediately preceeding, fully to explain the *Cauſe* of it. *They had forſaken* JEHOVAH, *and ſerved* Baal *and* Aſtaroth. "How *We* ſtand, as to the *former* Part of This Charge, particularly in relation to the peculiar Object of *Chriſtian* Worſhip," is an alarming Thought: And, in reference to the *latter*, with which perhaps we may think ourſelves wholly unconcerned; it ſhould be remembered, that ſerving *Baal* and *Aſtaroth* is by no means the only Species of Idolatry or Apoſtaſy, by which we may become *Tranſgreſſors*. They, *whoſe God is their Belly*, or (which is the ſame Thing) *who are Lovers of Pleaſure more than Lovers of* GOD: They, who *make Gold their Hope, or ſay unto fine Gold, "Thou art our Confidence*:" They, in ſhort, who *take not* GOD *for their Strength*, but *put their chief Truſt in Man*, or any created Being: All Theſe *in their Hearts depart* or apoſtatize *from the* LORD; and may on That Account juſtly look for the Inflictions of His ſore Diſpleaſure.

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[a] 1 Sam. II. 30.

[b] Judg. II. 13, 14.

But there is the leſs Occaſion to enter upon any formal Proof of our *prevailing Depravity* in *Theſe* or any other Reſpects; becauſe

This is a Topick, upon which, ſo long as we keep to *general* Complaints, we ſeem well enough agreed. I am afraid, however, ſuch Agreement will no longer continue, when we deſcend to a more *particular* Enquiry, "*Upon whom* the Blame ſhould principally fall," or "*Where* the Amendment is moſt wanted." If (for inſtance) we talk with the lower Ranks of Men, we ſhall probably find Theſe [a] *when they are hungry and fretful*, as ready, as the *Prophet* tells us He found them in *His* Time, *to curſe their King* if not *their* GOD; *and*, forgetful of every Thing amiſs in their own Way of Living, to *look upward* to their Rulers, as the ſole Cauſe of their Diſtreſſes, and the Authors of all their Grievances: While Thoſe *Rulers*, in Their Turn, unmoved by ſuch Complaints to examine their own Conduct, ſhall too often content themſelves with ſaying, "[b] *This People, who know not the Law, are curſed.*" Thus again: Too many among Ourſelves ſeem to think we have fully ſatisfied the Demands of our ſacred Function, when we have [c] *ſhewed the People their Tranſgreſſion and the Houſe of* Jacob *their Sins*; with a Zeal, which is indeed highly commendable, where *uniformly* exerted, and by ſuch as ſhew themſelves unblameable *Enſamples* as well as *unſparing* Monitors; but which muſt loſe much of its Propriety and Efficacy in Any, who are viſibly *Partakers in other Men's Sins*, while They *cry aloud* againſt them: On the contrary, we find *Some* (who may be well-meaning, but whom we muſt have Leave to think unreaſonable, Men,) charging *a great Part of the Irreligion of the Age upon* the Clergy; and even Thoſe, who, if not by Immoralities of other Kinds, yet by Ill-grounded Invectives againſt the Conſtitutions of our Church, and unmerited Slanders of the Body of Her Miniſters, have perhaps moſt of All contributed towards leſſening the Influence of their Paſtoral Labours, ſhall in Time of Danger be moſt earneſt in calling for the Exertion of their Influence, and leaſt candid in their Cenſures of any ſuppoſed Neglect on their Parts. The like *Self-Partiality* might, I fear, be obſerved in moſt other Inſtances. — But, in the mean while, *This*, ſurely, is a Seaſon, not for mutual Reproaches, but for Univerſal Amendment. God *hath given no Man Licence to ſin*; nor will He diſpenſe with any Order of Men for the Violation of His Laws: And, [a] *If Judgment muſt*

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[a] Iſai. VIII. 21.
[b] John VII. 49.
[c] Iſai. LVIII. 1.

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[a] Pet. IV. 17.

begin at the Houſe of GOD, *what ſhall the End be of* All others *that obey not His Goſpel?* — Inſtead of loſing Time, therefore, in debating, Who ſhould be *Firſt* in ſetting forward a Work, which All own to be neceſſary, let All cheerfully give their beſt Aſſiſtance towards It. And, let Us of *This Place* (though I am perſuaded, as free from the Contagion as any Part of the Kingdom) be as Exemplary on the preſent Occaſion as We uſually are on others: [a] *Looking diligently, leſt any Man fail of the Grace of* GOD; *leſt any Root of Bitterneſs ſpringing up trouble us, and thereby Many be defiled.*

Neither let our Endeavours be ſlackened from a vain Truſt in the Goodneſs of our Cauſe, the Purity of our Religion, the Excellency of our Civil Conſtitution, or even (ſuppoſing That could be proved as eaſily as the foregoing) the equal if not greater Immorality and Impiety of our preſent Adverſaries. The Religious Inſtitutions, and even the Civil Polity, of the *Jews* came immediately from GOD: *neither had He dealt ſo with any other Nation.* Yet my Text may inform us, that for *their Sins* GOD *had given them* up to the Depredations and Ravages of Nations, in this Inſtance at leaſt more injurious, and in many reſpects probably not leſs wicked than themſelves. And, how weak a Protection the Purity of a Church is againſt the Impurity of her Members, We may learn from the State of Chriſtianity for ſome Ages now paſt, in Thoſe very Countries, where It made Its firſt Appearance, and where for ſome Time after It moſt flouriſhed. The Truth is, the Juſtneſs of their Cauſe muſt at all Times be a moſt encouraging Conſideration to a *Virtuous* and *Religious* Community engaged in the Defence of it. But the Purity of a National Religion, and the Excellency of a National Government, are really Aggravations of Any People's Guilt, who, by neglecting or abuſing theſe Privileges, have rendered themſelves unworthy of their Continuance. And, how little Room We have to boaſt, how much to dread, on This Account, muſt now be left to every one's ſerious Conſideration: It being high Time that I ſhould proceed,

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[a] Heb. XIII. 15.

Secondly, To remind You of the *Comfort* ariſing to *ſincere Penitents*, in perillous Conjunctures, from the Doctrine of GOD's Government over, not only every Part of the material World, but alſo the unruly Wills of ſinful Men, and even the deſtructive Schemes of unjuſt Nations.

This is indeed a Contemplation, which the Beſt of Men muſt often want, and which may always to Such be a preſent Remedy againſt Dejection and Deſpondency of Mind. More particularly, *when we hear of Wars and Rumours of Wars*, well might *our Hearts be terrified*, were the Progreſs and the Iſſue ſolely left to the Dipoſal of blind Chance or inexorable Deſtiny, eſpecially were we to *fall into the Hands of Men* only: Men chafed by Oppoſition, *breathing* Revenge *and Slaughter*, and whoſe *tender Mercies are cruel*. But, if theſe Men are Themſelves *in the Hand of* God, whoſe Diſpleaſure alone gives them Power to hurt us: We may always be ſure of diſarming Them, if we will but remove His Diſpleaſure by removing the Cauſe of It, our own Sins. If wicked Men, and oppreſſive Nations be *Scourges* only to be imployed or laid aſide by the Governour of the Univerſe, when and where He pleaſeth; We need no longer be afraid of *the Rod*, than we neglect by a real Reformation to appeaſe the Wrath, and *ſtay the Hand*, of Him that holds It.

Could we then once ſee ſuch a general Amendment, what Security might we not promiſe ourſelves from the Attempts of our Enemies; what Succeſs to the Counſels and the Arms of our Sovereign!—And, may we not entertain ſome pleaſing Hopes, at leaſt from the *Riſing Generation?* This is neither a Place nor a Seaſon for Flattery. But, I truſt, there are not wanting Many amiable Patterns of Virtue and Piety (though, *how many ſoever They be, the* LORD *our* GOD *add unto their Numbers!)* among Perſons of ſuperiour Fortune and Rank in the Kingdom; of whom ſeveral lately were, and (indulge me if I add) ſome yet continue to be, the Ornament and Boaſt of This ancient Seat of Learning: Whoſe *Candles,* when [a] *ſet on Candleſticks,* may ſtill *give Light to All that are in the Houſe:* I mean, whoſe ſhining Examples, when advanced to Thoſe eminent Stations, which They are preparing themſelves to fill, may diffuſe their benign Influence into the remoteſt Corners of the Land, and be the bleſſed Inſtruments of Providence for recovering Its Virtue, and *lengthening Its Tranquillity,* through Ages yet to come.—Only let me preſume at the ſame Time to expreſs my affectionate Wiſhes, that Theſe our Growing Hopes, *our Crown of Rejoicing,* whilſt They reſolutely fly from the Enchantments of forbidden Pleaſure and the Poiſon of Infidelity, may alſo beware of being *carried away with* the ſpecious Appearance of *diverſe and ſtrange Doctrines,* or with the confident Revival of exploded Errours, or with the dangerous Affectation of uncommanded Auſterities. May They ever happily *continue in thoſe Things which They have heard and been aſſured of!* ſteadily purſuing the *plain Path of* God's *Commandments,* and immoveably adhering to the Communion of His *Church* into which They were *Baptized:* Which, if not abſolutely incapable of Improvement, (as what indeed *can* be ſo that hath any Thing *human* in it?) is yet, through the Grace of God accompanying Her Ordinances, and helping our Infirmities, ſufficiently perfect for the Purpoſes of Holineſs here and Happineſs hereafter; and which, therefore, Her Sons, when at any Time tempted to forſake Her, either by the Offer of more *Infallible* Guidance on one Hand, or by the Pretence of ſtricter *Purity* on the other, may juſtly addreſs, in the Words of the Diſciple to our Lord Himſelf, [a] "*To whom ſhall we go? Thou haſt the Words of Eternal Life.*"

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[a] Matt. V. 15.

In a Word: Corrupt as We of This Nation confeſſedly are, and diſcouraging as our

[a] John VI. 68.

Proſpects may on that Account appear; *the Faithful* (I truſt) *are* not ſo *failed from among us*, but that, by their united Endeavours and powerful Interceſſions, God *may* yet *be entreated for the Land*; may *hide our* King and our Church *from the Gathering together of the Froward*; and may, in His own good Time, *grant unto His People the Bleſſing of Peace*. In the mean while, to juſtify ſuch Expectations,

Laſtly, From the foregoing Doctrine, conſidered jointly with our paſt Miſcarriages and our preſent Fears, let us *All* be *Exhorted* to *ſee* and adore *the uplifted Hand* of Almighty God; to *bear the Rod*, and with Humility and even Thankfulneſs *turn to Him that ſmiteth Us*.

"Whether Thoſe National Diſappointments or Loſſes, which I need not here ſpecify, may be really intended as gracious Correctives and Warnings to us, or as Preludes to our Deſtruction;" God only knows. Gladly would I hope, that the intereſting Event may *yet* depend upon our own preſent Reſolutions and our future Conduct. Certain it is, that we have needed, and ſtill need, all the Inſtruction, that ſuch Diſpenſations are fitted to convey to us. The Dangers, if not Diſtreſſes, of which we are daily complaining,

ing, with Difficulty prevail upon us to *think upon* GOD, or to part with any of our expenſive Amuſements, or even to unite in the Uſe of Means for our Preſervation. Had we then hitherto *enjoyed Reſt on every Side,* or had we been generally ſucceſsful in all our Enterprizes; I will not ſay, whether we might not have been, if poſſible, more unmindful of our gracious Protector, and more wanton or even brutiſh in our Gratifications, than we have yet been. Nay, had we even now no foreign Enemy to employ our contentious Humours, I know not, whether we might not with ſtill greater Fierceneſs [a] *bite and devour one another*, and yet ſooner *be conſumed one of another*.

May we, however, from henceforward grow wiſer and better *by the Things which we have ſuffered!* We have, I hope, been making our *Peace with* GOD: Let us next *be at Peace among Ourſelves.* Let us not diſdain to learn from our very Enemies, or to borrow ſome of *Their* Reverence for Authority and Affection for their Monarch, ſome of *their* Love of their Country and Veneration for Its Eſtabliſhed Religion; in all which reſpects, our Affairs might not perhaps be hurt by our Emulating Their Attachment, how little

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[a] Gal. V. 15.

Cauſe ſoever we may have to envy them the reſpective Objects of it. And, by Way of Return, let us ſend them back, or at leaſt let us baniſh from among ourſelves, That Fondneſs for Diverſions, That Luxury and Extravagance, by means whereof They have ſo long already been enfeebling and impoveriſhing, that They have at length well-nigh enſlaved and deſtroyed, us. Could we but be perſuaded in good Earneſt to ſacrifice our coſtly Follies, our enervating Indulgences, our ruinous Vices, and our ſtill moſt tremendous Impieties; and all This, not for a Day only, which will little avail us; but ſo as to make a laſting Change in our Tempers and our Manners: Could we generally recover That ſedate, manly, virtuous, and religious Turn of Mind, for which our Anceſtors were once famed, and by which (under GOD) They were enabled not only to carry Terrour into Thoſe Countries, but to bring back Triumph from Thoſe Adverſaries, whom we have ſince taught to view us in a Light leſs formidable: We might ſtill humbly hope, that GOD *will* yet *awake for us, and make the Habitation of our Righteouſneſs proſperous:* Since He hath, in very comprehenſive Terms, Himſelf declared (and, I truſt, we have not yet excluded ourſelves from the Benefit of the encouraging Declaration) "[a] *At what Inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation and concerning a People, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it: If That Nation, againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from Their Evil; I will repent of the Evil, that I thought to Do unto Them.*"

Wherefore lift up the Hands that hang down, and the feeble Knees. There is, no doubt, a great Deal of Evil, Natural and Moral, in This our World. Let it, however, be remembered, to the unſpeakable Comfort of Good Men, that the Effects of Both are under the perpetual Controll and Direction of infinite Power, Wiſdom and Goodneſs. If *the Waves of the Sea are mighty and rage horribly; yet the* LORD, *who dwelleth on high, is mightier.* Should *the Kings of the Earth ſtand up, and the Rulers take Counſel together, againſt* the Reformed Religion, and the Legal Government, of our Country; *He, that ſitteth in the Heavens,* can with a *Look trouble their Hoſts,* and blaſt their Deſigns; and will, if we ſecure His Friendſhip, either *reſtrain the Remainder of their Wrath,* or even *make it work together to* us *for Good.* Or — ſhould the Ends of His righteous Government call for ſome more laſting Calamity upon a devoted People! yet, if our own *Ways pleaſe Him*, we ſhall, in all Events, ſoon be removed into that Land of Reſt and Peace; [a] *where the Wicked ceaſe from troubling*, and where *we ſhall no more hear the Voice of the Oppreſſor*: And ſhall, through the Merits of our Redeemer, *have our perfect Conſummation and Bliſs, both in Body and Soul, in His Eternal Glory*; when our [b] *laſt Enemy ſhall be deſtroyed, and Death* ſhall be *ſwallowed up in Victory*.

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[a] Jer. XVIII. 7, 8.

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[a] Job III. 17, 18. [b] 1 Cor. XV. 26, 54.

POSTSCRIPT.

I Take the Opportunity here given me by a vacant Page or two, to add a few Words on a Point of ſome *Moment*, which could only be touched upon at Pag. 340, of the foregoing Sermon.

For ſome Years paſt I have with Concern obſerved it *inſinuated*, that the *Clergy ſubſcribe to Articles which They do not believe*. But *This* has lately been aſſerted in very plain and direct Terms by a Gentleman, who calls himſelf *Britannicus*, in what he is pleaſed to entitle *Friendly Admonitions to the Inhabitants of great Britain in general, and to the Clergy of* *the Church of England in particular.* In his Addreſs to the *Latter,* He tells them, (Pag. 34.) he can't help obſerving, *that a great Part of the Irreligion and Infidelity of the Age we live in is chargeable upon* them: That *they ſolemnly ſubſcribe Articles, which it is notorious* they *do not believe* &c. *that the Articles of Religion, to which* they *ſubſcribe are Calviniſtic*; whereas, *it will not be denied, that the Generality of* them, *have embraced the* Unitarian *and* Arminian *Schemes.* Ibid. In ſhort (Pag. 37.) that they *ſubſcribe Articles, which it is certain, many of the wiſeſt and beſt of* them *do not believe:* With more in the ſame Strain. Theſe are Charges of a very high Nature againſt a Body of Men, whoſe Uſefulneſs to others and Comfort in their own Minds muſt greatly depend upon their Reputation for *Godly Sincerity.* And, whether the Author was aware of it or not, He muſt, I preſume, involve the Teachers of every Denomination in the ſame Accuſation; the *Law* not making, as far as I can find, any Diſtinction in relation to the Subſcription required of *All Teachers* to the *Doctrinal Articles* here meant. And if the *wiſeſt* and *beſt* of All Theſe can allow themſelves in ſuch Prevarication as himſelf has here but too juſtly deſcribed, what Profligates the reſt muſt be, he may leave to any of his Readers. However, leſt ſuch Aſſertions ſhould gain Credit for Want of being taken Notice of, it is deſired, that the following Particulars may be conſidered by equitable and ſerious Men.

1. It has over and over been proved, that the 39 Articles are far from being ſo *determinately Calviniſtical* but that they may *honeſtly* be ſubſcribed to by Perſons not in the *Calviniſtical* Scheme. This has been made appear from ſeveral Conſiderations: Particularly, From the plain Meaning of the Articles themſelves, when fairly interpreted upon a Compariſon with each other: From the probable Views of thoſe eminent Divines who firſt drew up theſe Articles, and the profeſſed Tenets of Others, who have ever ſince been concerned in ſubſcribing and requiring Aſſent to them: From ſeveral Expreſſions, not only in Thoſe Articles themſelves, but in other Offices of the Church (with which her Articles ſhould be ſuppoſed conſiſtent) that are not reconcileable with the Tenets of the *Calviniſts* upon (what are uſually called) *the five Points*; and laſtly, from the Non-acquieſcence of the *Calviniſts* in the preſent Set of Articles, and their repeated Attempts either to get them worded more ſtrictly, or to have others ſu-

per-added more determinate, in their Favour. All This; and much more, has been abundantly ſhewn, by many Writers in the laſt and preſent Century: In the former, by *Mountague* in his *Appello Cæſarem*, *Heylin* in his Hiſtory of the *Quinquarticular Controverſy*, *Playfere* in his *Appello Evangelium*, and (to cite no others) *Bull* in his *Apologia pro Harmoniâ* &c. And in the preſent Century, among ſeveral others, by Dr. *Waterland* in his *Supplement to the Caſe of Arian Subſcription*, and by an Anonymus Writer of *an Apology for the Church of England*, in Anſwer to an *Enquiry into the Cauſes of the Decay of the Diſſenting Intereſt*: Which Apology was Printed for *E. Midwinter* in 1732, and has, I believe, never ſince been anſwered. And ſurely, *after all This*, we might have hoped to have heard no more of this Calumny, of *our ſubſcribing to Calviniſtical Articles*. But we are ſo unhappy as to find, that, when Calumnies are likely to anſwer ſome *convenient Purpoſe*, they are not always diſcontinued ſo ſoon as they are refuted. But,

2. As to what the Author of the *Friendly Admonitions* hath obſerved of *Perſons in the* Unitarian *Scheme, when they ſtand forth before* God, *and call upon Him to witneſs to*

their Sincerity when they ſubſcribe Articles, which ſtrongly aſſert, that "*there is but one living and true* God: *That in the Unity of the Godhead there be three Perſons of one Subſtance, Power, and Eternity, the Father, Son and H. Ghoſt:* &c. Pag. 34, 35; I am extremely ſorry, that *Any* of my Brethren ſhould have given Occaſion for his Outcries on this Head: But am fully perſuaded, that he is greatly miſtaken in his Computation of the *Numbers* of ſuch Subſcribers. Whoever conſiders, how many excellent Writings in *Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity,* have been publiſhed by *Clergymen,* within the laſt 50 Years, ſome of them very lately *in Anſwer to an Eſſay on Spirit* &c. muſt be ſurprized at his *preſuming it will not be denied, that the Generality of* them *are in the* Unitarian *Scheme.* He himſelf, I hope, will not ſay, that *All Theſe* have been *writing,* and numberleſs Others *preaching,* what They *could* not *believe:* --- at leaſt 'till he's ſure that He is not only *Infallible* but able to *Diſcern the Hearts* of others; or that he really is (what he ſeems unwilling to allow *the Captain of our Salvation* to be) *Equal with* God. And then,

3. With regard to *Subſcription to explanatory Articles* in general; We may preſume

from the *Aſtoniſhment* expreſſed by this Gentleman (Pag. 37) at the *Continuance of This in a Proteſtant Church*, that he has *not yet* rightly conſidered that Matter. He talks of the Church as *impoſing Subſcription*; as if She required it from Any *againſt their own Judgment and Conſcience*: Whereas, though She expects it from All whom She admits into the Office of *Her Teachers*; yet She leaves Thoſe, who cannot honeſtly comply with it, at full Liberty to employ their Time and Abilities in ſome other Way. Nor does She make Theſe Articles a *Rule of Faith*: For *That* She refers all her Members to the *Holy Scriptures*. But, conſidering the *Senſe* not the *bare Words* of Scripture as being That Rule, She propounds Her Articles explanatory of that *Senſe*, by Way of Teſts or *ſolemn Interrogatories* to Candidates for the Office of Publick Inſtructors; in order to diſcover, Whether They are *ſound in the Faith*, and *apt to Teach* the real Doctrines, of Scripture: And requires *Subſcription* from them, as the beſt *Security* She can take from *Conſcientious* Men, that They will *teach none other Doctrine*. As to the *Right* which every *National Church* has thus to provide for the Edification of Her own Members: Had this Gentleman been acquainted with Dr. *Rogers*'s Review, Dr. *Stebbing*'s Rational Enquiry, Mr. (afterwards Bp.) *Conybeare*'s Sermon on Subſcription, Mr. *Dunlop*'s Preface to the *Weſtminſter* Confeſſion, or Mr. *White*'s and Mr. *Joſeph Clerk's* later Pieces againſt Mr. *Chandler*; He would have found Cauſe to think the *Proteſtant Churches* not quite ſo deſtitute, as he ſeems to imagine, of ſomething to ſay in Behalf of this Expedient, for diſcharging their important *Truſt* by preſerving *the Faith once delivered to the Saints.*

Upon the Whole: Who *Britannicus* is, or of what Denomination, I know not. I heartily wiſh We may All, Clergy and Laiety, be the *better* for any *Admonitions* given us at the preſent Seaſon. But, if his *Intentions* were Good (as I would fain believe from ſeveral Parts of his Performance, however declamatory) I fear his Reprehenſions will miſs of their Aim by being *over-charged.* Whether his random Accuſations of all the *Publick* Inſtructors in the Kingdom, *Authorized* or *Tolerated*, may not be doing the Work of the *Romiſh Emiſſaries* who are *Neither*, He will do well to conſider. And Others alſo may pleaſe to remember, that Thoſe *Emiſſaries* can aſſume *various* Characters; and may perhaps have no Scruple about interſperſing here and there a Fling againſt *Popery* itſelf among ſuch of their Invectives, under the Diſguiſe of *Friendly Admonitions*, as are calculated to defame and render odious a Body of Men, whom *They* have always found their moſt ſucceſsful Opponents, the ENGLISH CLERGY.

ters; and many perhaps have no Scruple about ſacrificing here and there a Thing [illegible] itſelf among ſuch of their Inventions, under the Diſguiſe of *Friendly Admonitions*, as are calculated to defame and render odious a Body of Men, whom *They* have always found their moſt ſucceſsful Opponents, the ENGLISH CLERGY.

A

SERMON

Preached before the HONOURABLE
HOUSE of COMMONS,
AT
St. *Margaret's* WESTMINSTER,
On *Monday*, *May* 29. 1758.

Being the Anniverſary Day of THANKSGIVING
for the Reſtoration of
King *CHARLES* the Second.

The SECOND EDITION.

Lunæ, 29° *Die Maii*, 1758.

Ordered,

THAT the Thanks of this Houſe be given to the Reverend Doctor *Fothergill*, Principal of Saint *Edmund* Hall in the Univerſity of *Oxford*, for the Sermon by him preached this Day before this Houſe at St. *Margaret*'s *Weſtminſter*; and that he be deſired to Print the ſame; and that Mr. *Clayton* and Sir *John Croſſe* do acquaint him therewith.

Martis 30° *Die Maii*, 1758.

Ordered,

That Mr. *Godolphin* and Mr. *Hunt* be added to the ſaid Gentlemen.

J. DYSON,
Cl. Dom. Com.

Psal. CXXII. 6, 7, 8, 9.

Pray for the Peace of Jeruſalem: *They ſhall proſper that love Thee. Peace be within thy Walls,* and *Proſperity within thy Palaces. For my Brethren and Companions' Sakes I will now ſay,* "*Peace* be *within thee. Becauſe of the Houſe of the LORD our GOD I will ſeek thy Good.*

THE peculiar Excellence of the *Holy Scriptures* is, that *they are able to make* Men *wiſe unto Salvation:* And to That great *End of Your Faith* ſhould our Diſcourſes from them be principally directed. Yet, ſince the Road to It lies through a *Country*, that muſt be paſſed by many *Sojourners* at the ſame Time; it may be a farther Commendation of theſe Writings to every Lover of Mandkind that they have not neglected to encourage in us

All a proportionable Regard to this intermediate Country, and a reaſonable Affection for our *Brethren and Companions* in It. And Occaſions, ſurely, there may be, when Theſe publick Exhortations will properly be employed, in cultivating among our Fellow-travellers through Life thoſe *ſocial* Diſpoſitions, which render them, not only eaſy in themſelves, but agreeable and helpful to one another *on their Way*.

Such an *Occaſion*, I preſume, is the preſent; and ſuch the *Diſpoſition*, which I would now recommend as a requiſite Qualification for the Buſineſs of *this Day*: A Day, ſacred to religious Joy, and Thankfulneſs to Almighty God; for having, almoſt a Century ago, *reſtored* to theſe Kingdoms the Bleſſings of legal Government and true Religion; and for having continued them down to our own Times. Yet for theſe Favours, important as they are, in vain ſhould we hope to find joyful or thankful Hearts, where there is not Something of *National Senſe*, or Feeling for the Community. Where this amiable Quality hath no Place in the Mind, the Man, inſtead of being affected with Joy by the *Peace* of his Country, will often be tempted to conſider it as an Obſtruction to his own Views.

But, where Publick Spirit prevails, Publick Bleſſings will be received with Delight and acknowledged with Gratitude. Whilſt the Parts of the Political *Body* are in their proper State, their Sympathies will be mutual: And as, *if one Member ſuffer, all the Members* proportionably *ſuffer with it*; ſo, *if one Member*, much more if the Body as ſuch *be honoured, all the* ſound *Members rejoice with it.*

It may not, therefore, be unſuitable to the Deſign of this Appointment, if I take Occaſion to explain and enforce the great Social Duty of *Loving our Country:* Not ſo much in order to implant this Affection in ſuch Breaſts, if ſuch there be, as are yet Strangers to it; (*That*, I fear, no Words, much leſs mine, could effect;) as by Way of ſtating its Nature and juſt Commendation, where It already reſides, and of pointing out its proper Objects, together with the due Methods of exerting it.

The well-known *Pſalm*, whence my Text is taken, has generally been conſidered as a beautiful Exemplification of this lovely Temper of Mind. And the whole of it will appear ſtill more applicable to the preſent Solemnity, if we ſuppoſe with ſome Commentators, that its Royal Author compoſed it upon His *Reſtoration* to his beloved Capital from an Exile, into which his rebellious Subjects had juſt before driven him. We may here imagine Him, contemplating with freſh Pleaſure (not leſſened, we may be ſure, by his late Abſence from it) the Situation, the *Compactneſs* and Strength of His Metropolis; reflecting with Wonder on the many Advantages which its Inhabitants had wantonly hazarded, but now again enjoyed; particularly thoſe of a ready Recourſe to the *legal Adminiſtrations of Juſtice*, a near Participation of the *benign Influences of Government*, and an eaſy Acceſs to the *ſolemn Offices of Piety*; at the ſame Time deeply ſenſible, how precarious all Theſe, and every human Bleſſing, muſt become upon any Return of like Diſorder and Confuſion. And, from ſuch a Train of Thought, how naturally might He break out in the Words before Us, — “ *O Pray* “ *for the Peace of* Jeruſalem: *May They proſ-* “ *ſper that love thee!* May thy Tranquillity “ never again be diſturbed by the Ambition “ of the Great, the Corruption of the Many, “ or the Madneſs of the People! *Peace be* “ *within thy Walls, and Plenteouſneſs within* “ *thy Palaces:* Be the Former henceforward “ thy Defence againſt every domeſtick as well

“ as foreign Enemy; and be the Latter no
“ more debaſed by the Inſolence of Rebel-
“ Triumphs, but ever appropriated to the
“ Purpoſes of Royal Magnificence. *For my*
“ *Brethren and Companions' ſakes,* Theirs, who
“ faithfully accompanied me through my
“ various Diſtreſſes; and even their's, who
“ though late are returned to their Allegiance;
“ *I will wiſh Thee Proſperity. Yea, becauſe of*
“ *the Houſe of the LORD our GOD,* thoſe
“ ſtated Offices of Religion, which were al-
“ ways my Delight; for which my *longing*
“ *Soul* lately *cried out,* and to which I am
“ now moſt happily reſtored, *I will,* by every
“ juſt Method in my Power, *ſeek to Do thee*
“ *Good.*”

But, without inſiſting farther on any ſuch ſpecial Reference as hath been juſt ſuppoſed: the Words will, of themſelves, ſuggeſt to our Conſideration the following Particulars: — The *Duty* of *Loving our Country,* as here recommended by the *Pſalmiſt*'s Example: — The *Objects,* which, like Him, a Lover of his Country will naturally have in his Wiſhes: And — The *Offices,* whereby He will be ready to promote Its true Intereſts. Which Particulars I would beg Leave to conſider, in the Order above-mentioned: With ſome

Application, as We go along, to the more immediate Occaſion of our preſent joyful Aſſembling.

I. There are *Three* different Views, in which the *Duty* may be placed, and its Obligations illuſtrated: Either, as our *Country* is conſidered *in Itſelf* and its conſtituent Parts: Or, as its Welfare may be ſet *in Competition* with our own *Perſonal Intereſts*: Or, as It is *contradiſtinguiſhed* from Countries *not our own*. In the *Firſt* View, I apprehend, the *Love* of it co-incides, as far as it goes, with *Benevolence* or Concern for general Happineſs: In the *Second*, It becomes *Diſintereſtedneſs* or *Publick Spirit*: in the *Third*, It may be denominated (at leaſt, according to the *original* Import, if not the common Uſe, of the Term) *Patriotiſm*.

1. Now, by our *Country*, conſidered *in Itſelf*, we ſhall (I conceive) moſt rationally underſtand, not barely a certain Tract of Land, which makes up the external Appearance of it; but chiefly, *the Collective Body of Its Inhabitants*, with their publick and joint Intereſts.

In this View, it is very natural, and has accordingly been moſt uſual, to obſerve, that our Country contains every Thing, that is in any eminent Degree entitled to our Affection. If, for Inſtance, Parents or Children, if *Brethren* or Kinſmen, if *Companions* or Friends, have, in Proportion to the Nearneſs of each Relation, their ſeveral Demands upon Us for Offices of Kindneſs: If, beyond theſe, upon conſidering ourſelves as Members of the ſame Community, Civil or Religious, we find new Relations ariſing thence, analogous to the former, bringing new Obligations along with them: Still our Country takes in all Theſe. Whatever endearing Connection there is in Blood, Vicinity, or Incorporation; Our Country comprehends every Thing of this Sort. And *That* muſt, ſurely, *Itſelf* be entitled to our Love, which contains every Object, that hath any peculiar Claim to it.

Let me add, that our Country, thus conſidered, includes in it *our own* Rights and Privileges, our Properties and our Perſons. Each Individual's private Intereſts are connected with, nay bound up in, Thoſe of the Community. And, if the Prophet *Jeremiah* could rationally exhort his Country-men, in a State of Captivity, to [a] *Seek the Peace of the City whither they* were *carried away Captives, for* that *in the Peace thereof They ſhall have*

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[a] Jer. XXIX. 7.

Peace: How much more intimately muſt Thoſe, who enjoy the Comforts of Life in their own Land, be concerned to promote the Welfare of that State, on which the Continuance of every ſuch Enjoyment depends.—Thus far, then, there appears no Difficulty either in the Notion or the Practice of the Duty before us: To wiſh well to our Country, in this Light, is like wiſhing the Safety of that Veſſel, on board of which every Thing dear to us in this World is embarked.

And indeed, ſo far is our Country from requiring us, ordinarily I mean, to neglect the Management of our domeſtick Affairs from an officious Sollicitude about Her Concerns; that She expects from us a proper Attention to them, as an important Branch of our Duty to Herſelf. The Temper blamed by Her is That, whoſe Regards not only *begin at home*, but *end there* too: A Temper as little ſuited to the Condition of Individuals, as it is to the Nature of Society; into which whoſoever voluntarily enters, or conſents to partake of Its Protection and Privileges, muſt in ſo doing virtually engage to contribute his Proportion of Time, Attention, Labour, and Subſtance to Its Service. Should *every* Member withdraw his own Share of Theſe (and what is allowable to One might be claimed by All) ſocial Union muſt be diſſolved, and the Publick no longer ſubſiſt: Or, ſhould *any One* reſolve to purſue an Intereſt ſeparate from all about him; I ſuppoſe, he would ſoon experience the Folly of ſuch a Scheme, upon finding that all Others had formed (as *in Reference to him* they moſt juſtly might form) the like Reſolution. In this View, Prudence as well as Juſtice requires every Member to beſtow a due Meaſure of his Concern upon the Community: That is, to expend a Part of His Care by way of enſuring the Benefit of the Remainder.

2. But we muſt not leave the Matter here. Publick Welfare may ſometimes, not only in preſent Appearance, but in Reality, interfere with private Gain: And we are *next* concerned to enquire, "What the Duty before us directs in *Caſes of ſuch Competition* between them.

That the Intereſts of a whole Community are, *in themſelves*, far more valuable than thoſe of any ſingle Member can be, is as true as that the Whole is greater than any One of its Parts. And, though it might be difficult to perſuade ſingle Perſons to eſtimate *their own* Intereſts, if not unreaſonable to expect that they ſhould adjuſt their own Regards, exactly according to this Proportion: Yet we all at firſt Sight condemn an Eagerneſs in any Man to enrich or advance himſelf by Methods prejudicial to General Happineſs; whereas the contrary Diſpoſition to poſtpone one's perſonal Advantage, and to hazard even Life itſelf, in Caſes of Moment to the Publick, is preſently approved by every worthy Principle within us. And accordingly we find this Quality not only much celebrated by the moſt eminent *Heathen* Writers, but often recommended, conſequentially at leaſt, by ſuch as have *Taught* the World with ſtill higher *Authority*. That great Chriſtian Grace of *Charity* is (we know) particularly characterized as [a] *Seeking not her own*. And, if we are called upon, as we are more than once by St. *Paul*, to forego our own [b] *Pleaſure* or *Profit*, for the ſake of our Neighbour, a private Perſon like ourſelves; We cannot but infer, that we are ſtill more forcibly obliged to ſacrifice our preſent Benefit to the laſting Intereſts of our Country. The Demands of the Duty muſt riſe in proportion as Its Compaſs is enlarged and Its Objects are multiplied.

Not that either Reaſon or Revelation will allow, much leſs require, us to ſurrender our moſt important Intereſts, thoſe of our immortal Souls, even for the ſake of our Country. Theſe no Man can rationally give up, if He could be ſuppoſed to benefit the Community by ſo doing. And therefore, if either the great [a] *Lawgiver* of the *Jews* or the great [b] *Apoſtle* of the *Gentiles*, ſhould *ſeem* to have declared his Affection for his Countrymen in Terms of that Import; ſuch glowing Expreſſions muſt not be too ſtrictly interpreted. Our *final Happineſs* is of too high Importance to be complimented away: It is a *Birthright*, which it would be *Profaneneſs* as well as Folly *to ſell* for any Conſideration: Which yet is, in Effect, done by All, who wilfully commit, or encourage others in committing, any Violation of Truth or Right for the ſake of a Party, or even of their Country itſelf; *ſaying*, "*Let us Do Evil that Good may* "*come.*"

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[a] 1 Cor. XIII. 5. [b] 1 Cor. X. 24, Phil. II. 4. &c.

However, whilſt we ſecure our Innocence, and with That our Title to an *Eternal Inheritance*, we ſhall find ourſelves not only obliged but encouraged to part with every Thing ſhort of theſe, when our Country calls for it. And, by the Way, ſo far is *Chriſtianity* from giving no Encouragement to the *Love of our Country*;

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[a] Exod. XXX. 32, &c.

[b] Rom. IX. 3.

ſo far is *that extended Self-intereſt* which It propoſes to our Hopes from being unfriendly to *Publick Spirit*; that It has laid the moſt ſolid, perhaps the only ſolid, Foundation for any exalted Degrees of this Virtue. Notwithſtanding a few ſtriking Examples with which Hiſtory may furniſh us, it is not eaſy to aſſign any ſubſtantial *Reaſons*, why They, who *have Hope in this Life only*, ſhould be forward to reſign the Advantages of it. But, when once our *Final* Intereſts are, as upon Chriſtian Principles they are, certainly and amply provided for: here is Room for every rational Argument in Favour of the Publick; here every generous Sentiment may *have its perfect Work*. Animated by ſuch Expectations [a] *None of us liveth to himſelf, and no Man dieth to himſelf*. In the Cauſe of our Country we [b] *gladly ſpend and are ſpent*; nay are ready to [c] *lay down our Lives for the Brethren*.

3. It remains, that the Duty ſhould be ſtated as our Country is conſidered in *Contradiſtinction from Countries not our own*: In which View the Love of It is ſo agreeable to the Propenſities of our Nature, that it will generally want rather to be regulated than excited in us.

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[a] Rom. XIV. 7. [b] 2 Cor. XII. 15. [c] Joh. III. 16.

For, by the Love of our Country in this reſpect we muſt by no means underſtand any ſuch extravagant Partiality for our Countrymen, as operates to the *Excluſion* of all others from our Offices of Humanity: nor yet ſuch a paſſionate Zeal for our own Country's Glory, as purſues Its Object by annoying and trampling upon whatever happens to be in our Way to it. No: *This*, inſtead of being a commendable Affection, is in every Degree a blameable, in ſome Degrees a deteſtable, Turn of Mind. And, if thoſe refined Thinkers, who would inſinuate, that the Author of our Religion has no where recommended the Love of our Country, mean no Love of It but This; we own the Charge: So far is our Religion from countenancing, that it ſtrongly condemns, ſuch a narrow, inhoſpitable, Spirit: And this, inſtead of being any Diſcredit to it, we muſt have Leave to think an eminent Inſtance of its Excellency and Importance. Even the *Jews*, notwithſtanding the peculiar Nature of their Oeconomy, were [a] commanded to treat *the Stranger* with Tenderneſs and Affection. And we *Chriſtians* (though equally concerned, by the proper *Weapons of our Warfare*, to *contend for the Faith delivered to* Us) are taught, without Diſtinction of *Sect* or *Country*, to account every Man our [a] *Neighbour*, and to aſſiſt him as ſuch, whoſe Circumſtances ſtand in Need, and whoſe Situation may place him within the Reach, of our Beneficence. In ſhort; whilſt we love our own Country, we ſhould never forget, that Others are in the ſame Way affected toward theirs; nor muſt we ever loſe Sight of that great Law of Reaſon as well as Revelation, "[b] *Whatſoever Ye would* "*that Men ſhould Do unto You, Do Ye even* "*ſo unto Them.*"

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[a] Exod. XXIII. 9, 12. Levit. XIX. 10. Deut. X. 19.

But, if by the Love of our Country theſe Objectors mean only a *Love of Preference* to other Countries; whenſoever they ſhall with Impartiality peruſe *That Book*, which They affect to cenſure, They will hardly find *one* Perſonage of any Eminence therein recorded, in whoſe Temper this Affection appears not to have been a prevailing Ingredient. The Time would fail me to cite all the Examples to this Purpoſe; and if Precepts are leſs frequent, they are ſurely leſs needful; ſince *This* is a Diſpoſition, which, if not ſtrictly born with us, yet takes Poſſeſſion of us before we are conſcious of its Production, and continues to co-operate with our Rational Powers, often to go before them, ſo long as our Minds retain any thing great or generous. It ſeems indeed to be of the ſame Origin, and not only juſtifiable but amiable on the ſame Principle, with that *Natural Affection,* which appears in every Creature for thoſe of its Kind that are moſt nearly related to it: Or, if any human Creatures are found *without This*; We may, upon the [a] Authority of an inſpired Apoſtle, rank all ſuch among the blackeſt Characters that our degenerate Nature can furniſh.

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[a] Luke X. 30—37. [b] Matt. VII. 12.

Nor let this Affection be condemned as a blind Inſtinct only: It is at leaſt ſuch an Inſtinct as, under due Regulation, approves itſelf to the juſteſt Reaſon. Our Benevolence ought indeed to reach as far as our Nature itſelf reacheth. Our Creator [b] *having made of one Blood all Nations of Men,* at how great a Diſtance ſoever they may *dwell on all the Face of the Earth*; no Partaker of the Species muſt be excluded from our Good-will, or deſignedly from the Influences of it. But then, theſe Influences will naturally deſcend moſt on thoſe, who are moſt within the Sphere of their Activity. Such a Diſtinction among Particulars is really for the Beauty and Benefit of the Whole. Were any Parents to be actuated by no *peculiar* Yearnings for their own Off-ſpring; Or, were the Natives of any Country equally indifferent to *That* with every other Spot upon the Globe; It may be as eaſily imagined, what a deſolate Waſte ſuch an unfriended Country muſt ſoon become in this latter Caſe, as how wretched and uſeleſs ſuch neglected Infants muſt be in the former. Whereas, whilſt each Individual employs (I ſay not, the Whole, but) the Chief of his Care, where Nature recommends a Preference; the Buſineſs of the World goes on regularly and with Advantage; and *every Thing is beautiful in its* Place as well as its *Time*. Accordingly, the ſame Apoſtle, who exhorts us to [a] *Do Good unto all Men*, leaves the Exerciſe of our Beneficence to *Opportunities*; and not only allows but recommends an *eſpecial* Regard to *them that are of* our own Community, *the Houſehold of Faith*.

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[a] See Rom. I. 31. and 2 Tim. III. 3.

[b] Act. XVII. 26.

Let me juſt obſerve farther, that theſe Reflections on the Love of our Country in general may, in proportion, be applied to any ſmaller Subdiviſions of it, to which we ſtand in a ſimilar Relation: The Neighbourhood, for inſtance, which gave us our Native Air; the Corporation whoſe Privileges we enjoy; or the Society, which imparted to us (what may be at leaſt as valuable as either) an ingenuous, a virtuous and religious Education. We muſt not, indeed, contract our good Wiſhes, or confine our good Offices, within the narrow Limits of any of theſe. Yet, as Each of them comes naturally recommended to a particular Affection; ſo, other Circumſtances being equal, Each of them may ſeem to have a prior Claim to our *voluntary* Services. Or, however, ſhould any Partaker of ſuch Advantages, inſtead of cheriſhing thoſe tender Sentiments that grow out of theſe Connections, be ready, upon every ſordid View, to renounce or counteract them --- I ſhall only ſay, He muſt be a Stranger to the Spirit which dictated that beautiful Apoſtrophe, “[a] *If I forget thee,* O Jeruſalem, *let* “ *my Right-hand forget her Cunning: If I do* “ *not remember thee, let my Tongue cleave to* “ *the Roof of my Mouth; if I prefer not* Jeru- “ ſalem *above my chief Joy.*”

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[a] Gal. VI. 10.

Upon the Whole: Our Country is entitled to our Affection in *every* View: In *Herſelf*, as comprehending whatever in this World moſt deſerves our Concern: In *Competition with our own Secular Intereſts*, whenſoever Her Proſperity calls upon us to poſtpone, or Her Preſervation to relinquiſh them: And *in*

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[a] Pſal. CXXXVII. 5, 6.

Compariſon with other Countries, ſo far as to prefer her Honour or Advantage to Theirs, though not ſo as to exclude them from our good Wiſhes, much leſs to expoſe them to our Hatred or injurious Treatment. In a Word; the Duty before us muſt, at the loweſt, reſtrain us from ſacrificing our Country's Reputation, or betraying Her Intereſt, out of any ſelfiſh Conſideration: We muſt not *diſappoint* Her of our juſt Share of Service; *though* our Rendering it ſhould, at the Time, *be to our own Hinderance.*

II. But, that our Affection may not be thrown away upon what is uſeleſs to our Country, and unworthy of our own Regard; it may now be proper to conſider, What thoſe *Objects* are, which a Friend to His Country will rationally have in his View. And Theſe, according to the *Pſalmiſt*, ſeem reducible chiefly to Two Articles: Namely, Its *Temporal Felicity*; here repreſented by the Terms, *Peace*, *Plenteouſneſs* and *Proſperity*: And Its publick Proviſions for the decent and devout Celebration of *Religious Worſhip*; intimated by His declared Concern for *the Houſe of the* LORD.

1. Under the *Former* of theſe, I pretend not to enumerate all the Ingredients in National Felicity: Nor will the Time permit me to enlarge upon *Peace* in its primary Notion, as it ſignifies a State of Publick Quiet, and Freedom from Wars, foreign or domeſtick; tho' It might otherwiſe well deſerve, eſpecially at the preſent Juncture, to be ſpoken to *ſeparately*, as an Object of a Patriot's Thoughts diſtinct from *Plenty* and *Proſperity*. But, conſidering them jointly, I ſuppoſe, the Condition of any Country will not fall much ſhort of the *Pſalmiſt*'s Wiſhes for his own, which is *plentifully* accommodated with, not only the Neceſſaries, but the Conveniences and Comforts, of Life; in *peaceable* Poſſeſſion of ſuch Advantages, (which I need not ſpecify) as render Its Inhabitants *proſperous* at home and reſpected abroad; and all Theſe guarded by wholſome Laws duly executed, under a Government well eſtabliſhed and well adminiſtred.

For, You will permit me to obſerve, eſpecially on this Occaſion, that, as Peace is neceſſary to give Reliſh and Enjoyment, ſo will Laws and Government always be to give Security and Stability, to every publick Bleſſing. Take away *Theſe*, and You leave private Property wholly precarious, and perſonal Induſtry without fitting Encouragement; and, in conſequence, You cut off from National Proſperity its neceſſary Supplies. When [a] *there was no King*, no ſettled Government, *in Iſrael*, we read that *every Man did that which was right in his own Eyes*. The Obſervation was thought of Moment enough to be ſeveral Times repeated by the ſacred Hiſtorian: who has alſo taken Care to intimate how little Mankind is to be truſted with ſo much Licence, by recording ſome grievous Outrage upon Decency, Juſtice, or even Humanity, as having conſtantly accompanied it. Man is not, indeed, ſo malevolent or miſchievous a Being, as he has ſometimes been repreſented. Yet, ſo powerfully is he affected with his own Feelings for himſelf, and ſo continually does he find, or imagine that he finds, the Succeſs of his own Schemes, and the Gratification of his own Appetites, obſtructed by thoſe of Others; that, were it not for the Intervention of Law and Authority, This World muſt be a deplorable Scene of *Envying and Strife, Confuſion and every evil Work*.

Juſtly therefore might the wiſe *Pſalmiſt* conſider it as one endearing Recommendation of

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[a] Judg. XVII. 6. — XVIII. 1. — XIX. 1. — XXI. 25.

Jeruſalem, that *There were ſet Thrones of Judgment:* And juſtly will all Lovers of their Country, among other Marks of their Affection for it, be zealouſly concerned for the Preſervation of its Order and the Support of its Government: *As Free;* but with the Freedom of civilized Creatures, not of Savages: A Freedom, directed by Rules and ſubject to Reſtraints; but ſuch Rules and Reſtraints as, if they limit the Exerciſe, at the ſame Time protect the Enjoyment, and ſecure all the Benefits, of It.

Happy had it been for both Prince and People in the Days of our *Forefathers,* had They in Time been ſenſible of the Value of an eſtabliſhed Government: and happy will it be for *Us,* if all Orders of Men are *yet* become wiſe by their Experience. It will not be expected, that I ſhould here attempt to trace out *the Beginnings of* Their *Sorrows;* or to aſſign to each of the then contending Parties its exact Share of the Blame. To us, at this Diſtance, there ſeem to have been Occaſions of Jealouſy given; as well by ſome undue Stretches of Power, ſome alarming Interpretations of Law, in behalf of the Crown; as by ſome equally undue Fierceneſs of Oppoſition and Extravagance of Demand, on the

Part of the People; both unfortunately aggravated by ſeveral concurring Circumſtances of thoſe Times. Yet, I cannot doubt, but Many on both Sides at firſt ſincerely meant the real Good of their Country. That the *King Himſelf* did ſo, beſides His approved Character for Virtue, Piety, and Goodneſs of Heart, the Conceſſions, which He made early in the Diſpute, and before His Diſtreſſes could have extorted them from Him, will ſurely by equitable Judges be admitted as ſufficient Evidence. And, in fact, the Reparation then offered for what was paſt, and the Security given for the future, ſo far ſatisfied many reaſonable Men and real Patriots, that They became thence-forward zealous Adherents to the Royal Cauſe, convinced that It was become the Cauſe of the Kingdom. But, alas! it was then too late to ſave their Country: A Spirit of Diſcord and Suſpicion was gone forth: Auxiliaries were called in, who brought with them little Acquaintance with, and leſs Affection for, the *Engliſh* Conſtitution: Several of Its former Friends were by Degrees become reconciled to Meaſures, wherein they had at firſt never dreamt of engaging: And They, who could not go theſe Lengths, found the Buſineſs taken out of their Hands, by

Men better prepared for what ſoon after followed; I mean, for ſuch Invaſions of private Property, ſuch Violations of publick Juſtice, ſuch Inſults upon all Laws, human and divine, as render the Annals of theſe Times like the [a] *Roll of a Book,* that was *ſpread before the Prophet; which was written within and without: And there was written therein Lamentation, and Mourning, and Wo.*

But, to turn away our Eyes from a Sight ſo painful: After every Set of Men, perhaps every ſingle Man, that had in any eminent Degree broken in upon the eſtabliſhed Conſtitution, had as eminently experienced the Effects of a wanton Departure from It; and had, by a memorable Example of *This their Fooliſhneſs,* in ſacrificing publick Utility to private Views, left Us *their Poſterity* a ſtanding Admonition againſt *praiſing their Sayings:* Then did the ſame God, [b] *who commanded the Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs,* graciouſly vouchſafe to [c] *comfort* our Fathers, *after the Time that He had plagued them, and for the Years wherein they had ſuffered Adverſity;* by [d] *Reſtoring their Judges as at the firſt, and their Counſellors as at the Beginning.* And, if this Part of our Conſtitution hath, on any ſubſequent Occaſions, received yet farther Improvement; if the Boundaries of the Monarch's Prerogative and the Subject's Rights, by being more explicitely declared, are become leſs liable to be tranſgreſſed by Either, to the Hazard of Both; We, who enjoy theſe additional Advantages, have not, on that Account, leſs Cauſe to bleſs God upon every Return of this auſpicious Day, which opened the Way to them.

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[a] Ezek. II. 9, 10. [b] 2 Cor. IV. 6. [c] Pſal. XC. 15. [d] Iſai. I. 26.

2. Yet, after all: The beſt Proviſions merely ſecular, Civil Government Itſelf, and This too in Its moſt advantageous Form, and under a Prince the moſt ſteady in His Adherence to It, will be inſufficient to fill up the Meaſure of a Nation's Happineſs. Something farther will be wanting to complete the Wiſhes of a Friend to his Country: Something that can reach the *Heart* both of Governour and Governed: Something, that alone can, for any Time, ſecure the *Peace*, and ſanctify the *Proſperity*, of a Community; that can render Its *Plenteouſneſs* not a *Snare* or a Curſe, but a real Bleſſing, and prevent Its being, perhaps imperceptibly, ruined under the very Forms of Its own admired Conſtitution.

Senſible of this, the Royal *Pſalmiſt* was *glad when they ſaid unto Him,* “*We will go* “*into the Houſe of the LORD.*” He well knew, that a conſtant Attendance on God’s publick Worſhip was one of the beſt Preſervatives of Religion in the Hearts of his People, one of the beſt Evidences of Its Influence there; as alſo, that ſuch a Principle was the only Security He could have of their Obedience to Himſelf, or their Fidelity to each other. Without This, as He well knew, all Things would ſoon run into Diſorder and Confuſion: Unawed by the *Fear of GOD,* Men would at all Times be prepared for any pleaſing Vice, any gainful Villany: And whilſt [a] *Sentence againſt an Evil Work* could, for that very Reaſon, by human Judicatures be neither certainly pronounced, nor *ſpeedily executed; the Hearts of the Sons of Men* would be yet more and more *fully ſet in them to Do Evil.* Whereas, [b] *by the Fear of the LORD, Men* would *depart from Evil:* This Principle would preſerve their Integrity where no other could reach them; and would render their Promiſes a ſufficient Security, or their Oaths, where neceſſary, a deciſive Evidence. Above all, He knew, that National Piety would beſt recommend both Himſelf and his People to that all-powerful Being; who will not fail to make *happy that Nation whoſe GOD is the LORD, and the People whom He chooſeth for His own Inheritance.*

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[a] Eccl. VIII. 11. [b] Prov. XVI. 6.

The Care of Religion, therefore, and of Its ſacred Rites, will always have a Place in the Thoughts of every rational Lover of His Country. And, bleſſed be God for the Religious Privileges as on This Day *reſtored,* and ſtill continued, to the People of this Land: Were but our *Wiſdom* in the Obſervance of them and Improvement under them equally *conſpicuous in the Sight of the Nations* around us, well might they ſay, "[a] *Surely,* "*this great Nation is a Wiſe and Underſtanding People!*" -- Beſides that daily Acceſs to the *holy Scriptures,* which our Church freely allows and recommends to all her Members, She provides for their being thence farther inſtructed in *Words of Truth and Soberneſs, every Sabbath-Day.* In Her *publick Worſhip* She requires their Conformity to *Uſages* few, eaſy, natural; at a due Diſtance, on one hand from indecent Familiarity or Negligence, and from burdenſome Pomp and Multiplicity on the other: Whilſt by her *ſtated Offices* She invites, without *compelling,* all devoutly diſpoſed Minds to join *rationally* with Her in *well-weighed* Expreſſions of a manly, grave, rightly directed Piety. And as to Thoſe, who ſtill unhappily exclude themſelves from the Benefit of Theſe Proviſions; it may reaſonably be expected, that the known Candour and Equity of Her *preſent Governours* will at length have the deſired Effect upon them. Eſpecially ſince Her *external Polity* is at once beſt fitted to that of the State, and moſt agreeable to the primitive Pattern: Diſtinguiſhed only by the Advantage of being ſupported and encouraged, inſtead of being oppreſſed and perſecuted, by the Civil Power: Which Diſtinction, conferred on Her by the LEGISLATURE, and now for many Years enjoyed under the Protection of our gracious SOVEREIGN, She *accepts always, in all Places, with all Thankfulneſs.*

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[a] Deut. IV. 6.

But, ſhould any real Friends to this Part of the Conſtitution of their Country be diſpoſed to conſider ſuch a Protection as *now* become leſs needful, or to countenance the Projects of Men *given to Change* in hopes of an Ideal, but humanly unattainable, Perfection: They may be pleaſed to recollect, with what Conſequences the like Innovating Experiments were formerly attended. When firſt diſcontented Men were invited to bring in their Exceptions to the Eccleſiaſtical Eſtabliſhment, and to propoſe with Boldneſs new Plans of their own; little was it imagined, that an Edifice, beautiful for its Order, compact in its Structure, venerable for its Agreement with the Model of Antiquity, and in every reſpect fitted to be *the Joy of the whole Land*, could within any ſhort Space of Time have become an Object of the loudeſt Clamour for its Demolition *even to the Ground.* Yet, when a Breach was once made, all This and more ſoon came to paſs. A few ill-judged Scruples about ſome innocent Habits and at worſt harmleſs Ceremonies of the Church, were eaſily cheriſhed into a determined Rancour againſt Her Inſtitutions in general. The Sourneſs of a few Men, whoſe over-proportioned Sufferings from two or three of her Prelates were remembered much longer than the Provocations they had given, quickly leavened the Maſs of the People into a Diſtaſte of Her whole Hierarchy: 'Till, in Concluſion, an Order of Governours, which had preſided in the Chriſtian Church from its earlieſt Settlement, was aboliſhed as Anti-Chriſtian; the decent Rites of our Church exploded; the Uſe of her Liturgy rendered penal; and Her Adherents in general, but Her able as well as faithful **Defender** eſpecially, expoſed to ſuch ſevere Trials, ſuch barbarous Indignities, as a ſober Heathen could not have beheld without Compaſſion and Aſtoniſhment.

I forbear to recount the many Acts of Diſſimulation and Hypocriſy, the Perverſions of God's Word, Profanations of His Temple, and Proſtitutions of the ſacred Character, by which this *ſtrange Reformation* was effected; as alſo what Sort of Purity and Perfection was obtained by it; or, rather, what endleſs Diviſions and Hereſies of Some, what Enthuſiaſm and Frenzy of Others, what Contempt of Ordinances and Blaſphemy of Many more, overſpread theſe Kingdoms in Conſequence of it: Nor, indeed, ſhould a Theme ſo melancholy have been ſuggeſted to Your Thoughts on *This Day*, but in order to recall them with more Advantage to the proper Buſineſs of it; I mean, the Adoration and Praiſe of that great *Comforter of them that are caſt down*; who, in His own good Time, *turned Him unto the Prayer of the poor, deſtitute*, Sons of the Church of *England*; and *at their Deſire, raiſed up this Tabernacle of* David *that was fallen*; *cloſing its Breaches*, and *building it as in the Days of Old*. --- May His watchful Providence ever preſerve It firm and unſhaken; to the Glory of His own

Name, to the Ornament and Support of the Reformed Churches in general, and to the Comfort and Salvation of the People of our Land! And may He, together with *This*, continue the other Bleſſings of peaceful Order and legal Government, to our lateſt Poſterity!

III. Something, however, muſt be done on our Part. Let us then conſider, By what *Offices* a Lover of His Country muſt endeavour to promote its Welfare. And Theſe are, *Praying for it*, and *ſeeking to Do it Good.*

1. The *Former* of theſe, I conceive, may well comprehend *all* Methods of Application to the Supreme Being in behalf of our Country, whether by *humble Petition* or *devout Thankſgiving:* Both of which are Conditions, proper in themſelves, and by His Appointment neceſſary, according as our Situation may be, to give Efficacy to all our Endeavours for Ourſelves or Others. *From the Father of Lights every good Gift cometh down:* But to His Providence we ſhould eſpecially aſcribe the giving or the withdrawing of National Bleſſings, the Reſtoring of ſettled Government and pure Religion when for a Time withdrawn, and the Preſervation of them through all thoſe Changes and Chances, to

which every Advantage upon Earth is perpetually expoſed. The *Men of this World* are indeed apt to overlook theſe Truths, and to talk in a different Language: But Truths they are, notwithſtanding; and this is the Language, theſe the Sentiments, every-where authorized by inſpired Writers. We find St. *Paul* in particular *exhorting Timothy* to take Care, in the Direction of Religious Offices, [a] *that Supplications, Prayers, Interceſſions, and Giving of Thanks* ſhould *be made for all Men; For Kings and All that* were *in Authority: That* they might *lead quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godlineſs and Honeſty.* And, if ſuch Devout Addreſſes in favour of the Community in which they lived, and of thoſe Members of it eſpecially, whoſe Stations rendered their Conduct of the moſt extenſive Influence, were in thoſe Days fit and conducive to that End; they muſt, at all other Times be proper, and, on ſolemn *Occaſions* of Rejoicing for National Benefits, peculiarly *good and acceptable in the Sight of GOD our Saviour.*

And certainly, if ever [b] *the merciful and gracious LORD hath ſo done His marvellous Works,* as *that they ought to be had in Remembrance,* the Deliverance of this Day will juſtify Us in thus publickly and annually aſcribing it to Him. The *Value* of it in *Itſelf* may be in ſome meaſure eſtimated from what has already been ſuggeſted. But much there was alſo in the *Circumſtances* attending it to call for our warmeſt Returns of Thanks and Praiſe, and to point out the adoreable Object to whom they are due. -- When the devouring *Sword* had been fully executing its direful Commiſſion *to Go through this* devoted *Land*; ſcarce a Corner whereof had eſcaped its Fury, ſcarce *an Houſe been paſſed over in which there was not one dead*: When three, once flouriſhing, Kingdoms had long been filled with Violence, Oppreſſion, Perjury, Murder, often rendered ſtill more ſhocking by being perpetrated under the Formality of Juſtice and the Maſk of Piety: When thoſe ſeemingly incompatible Evils of Anarchy and Tyranny, of Enthuſiaſm and Profaneneſs, of Bigotry and Sacrilege, had for Years together, with Forces wonderfully united, been triumphing in the Ruin of every Thing great, the Extirpation almoſt of every Thing good, in theſe Nations! What Power or Wiſdom leſs than Infinite could have reſcued our Country from Wretchedneſs ſo extenſive, ſo complicated: -- at a *Time*, when all human Means for accompliſhing, or even for attempting, ſuch a Work, ſeemed utterly deſperate, if not quite exhauſted : -- in a *Method*, the moſt deſirable to the Nation that could have been imagined ; without any freſh Effuſion of her own Blood, or embarraſſing Obligation to her Neighbours : -- to a *Degree*, exceeding the moſt ſanguine Hopes of the Friends to the Conſtitution ; all the Breaches that had been made in both its Parts being completely repaired ; and the Church in particular ſoon after guarded by ſuch farther Securities, as have (under the Protection of Heaven) preſerved Her Doctrine, Worſhip, and Privileges unto this Day : -- with an *Harmony* and Concurrence of all Orders of Men ſo marvellous, that (in the Words of the Noble *Hiſtorian)* "[b] a Man could not but wonder where thoſe "People dwelt that had done all the Miſ"chief, and kept the King ſo many Years "from the Comfort and Support of ſuch ex"cellent Subjects,"

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[a] 1 Tim. II. 1, 2, 3. [b] Pſal. CXI. 4.

Such a *Reſtoration* no Man, poſſeſſed of a true Love for his Country, can well recollect without ſome Sentiments of Gratitude to All, who in any Degree *voluntarily* contributed toward It : Nor can we eaſily forget thoſe *true Patriots* (One of them juſt now mentioned) who, notwithſtanding the large Share that they had born with their *Sovereign* in his va-

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[a] See Lord *Clarendon*'s Hiſt. 8vo Vol. laſt. Page 761.

rious *Afflictions,* loved their Country and knew its Intereſts too well, to lay hold on the Opportunity, then offered by the Temper of the People, for complimenting Him with a Settlement dangerous to Its Liberties. Yet, what Regard ſoever may be paid to the *Memory* of ſubordinate Inſtruments, the *Glory* of the Whole muſt ever be reſerved for HIM, who alone *hath the Hearts of Men at His Diſpoſal, as the Rivers of Water:* Who can *turn their Fierceneſs to His* own *Praiſe*, and *ſay* with Authority to the *Raging of* this *Sea* alſo, “*Hitherto ſhalt thou come, but no further: and* “*here ſhall thy proud Waves be ſtayed.*”

This then being *the Day, which the LORD hath made,* well may *we rejoice and be glad in it.* Let it, however, be remembered, *What Sort* of Joy and Gladneſs ſuch a Day calls for. *When the LORD turned again the Captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream,* ſaid the devout [a] *Pſalmiſt.* And, if ſomething of a like incoherent and tumultuous Rapture appeared in the Conduct of our Forefathers, upon ſo ſudden a Tranſition from the Darkneſs of Deſpair to the Sunſhine of Proſperity; ſuch irregular Tranſports, before cool Reaſon could well be heard, were leſs to be wondered at; though the Luxury, Diſſoluteneſs and

[a] Pſal. CXXVI. 1.

Impiety, which too generally flowed in upon the Nation at That Period, could not then be excuſed, can hardly ever ſince be too much lamented. But ſurely, *it is high Time* for Us, at this Diſtance, *to awake out of Sleep*. We, who enjoy the Bleſſings then reſtored, without having felt the preceeding Agonies, may view them with Sedateneſs, and ſhould acknowledge them with Sobriety. Should *our* Thankfulneſs for ſuch Mercies, betray us into any Exceſs in ourſelves, any Violence to our Brethren, any Undutifulneſs to our Governours, or any Impiety towards GOD: *All ſuch Rejoicing* muſt be not only *evil* in itſelf, but on ſuch an Occaſion monſtrous. The Joy, which this Day requires, is a manly, decent, well-tempered Joy: a Joy conducted under *the Fear of GOD,* and directed, as *whatſoever we Do* ſhould be, *to His Glory*.

2. When we have thus expreſſed our Zeal for our Country by devout *Addreſſes to Heaven* for Its *Proſperity*; it will next be proper to exert our own Endeavours by *Seeking to Do it Good:* that is, by a conſtant Readineſs, in all proper Ways, to promote its Welfare; and, as its Exigencies appear to require, to contribute to its Support: Upon a due Attention to the Demands of our reſpective Stations, and the Opportunities by Providence put in our Power.

From Perſons engaged in *Offices of Truſt* for the Community, Integrity will at all Times, and a proportionable Degree of Vigilance and Activity will ordinarily, be expected. *They* have undertaken the Care of the Publick; which, therefore, is become their proper Buſineſs. And, though the Calls of the Publick for the Exertion of this Care will be moſt importunate in Seaſons of Danger; one Way there is, whereby Men of Eminence may, in the moſt quiet Times, be of ſingular Service to their Country; I mean, by a Regard to Order and Virtue, and (for the ſake of Both) to Piety and Religion, as conſpicuous as their Rank and Stations. The powerful Influence of a good Example adds an Amiableneſs to their Authority, and gives Efficacy to their publick-ſpirited Undertakings. But, without that, vain would be all their Pretences to Patriotiſm, nay even their ſincere Endeavours for their Country's Good.

As to *private Perſons*; *Their* Activity and Zeal may, at certain Seaſons, be more particularly wanted: and then, the Concerns of the Publick become in ſome Meaſure their's alſo; that is, in due Subordination to their Superiours, and ſo far as they are qualified to exert themſelves uſefully. Otherwiſe, private Members of any Community will generally beſt diſcharge their Obligations to it by *Studying to be Quiet, and to Do* their *own Buſineſs* in It: Contributing their Induſtry to the common Stock, without diſturbing the Induſtry of their Neighbours; and without oſtentatiouſly or invidiouſly affecting an extraordinary Zeal, where no extraordinary Demand appears for it.

By what more particular Methods the Good of his Country may beſt be purſued, muſt be left to *Each Man's* Diſcretion and Integrity to determine for himſelf, The Objects to be kept in View have been conſidered: And *an honeſt and good Heart* will ſeldom be at a Loſs to diſcern the plain Path that leads to them. Permit me only to obſerve in few Words; that, -- In what relates to *Himſelf*, the True Patriot, inſtead of enervating his Body by vicious Indulgences, or over-clouding his Mind by habitual Exceſs, will ſtudy to preſerve and improve the Powers of Both; for this, among other important Ends, that He may be in conſtant Readineſs to aſſiſt his Country with his beſt Services, whenſoever they ſhall be propely called for by It: -- In his Intercourſe with his *Neighbours*; inſtead of fomenting Parties, or *ſowing Diſcord among Brethren*; by an upright and peaceable Conduct, by removing Wants and relieving Diſtreſſes, by rectifying Prejudices and reconciling Differences, He will do his Part towards diffuſing Harmony and Happineſs all around him: -- In his Behaviour, laſtly, toward His *Superiours* and *Governours*; inſtead of either betraying the *Liberty* of others for any perſonal Advantage, or *uſing* his own *for a Cloke of Malicîouſneſs*, He will, on the ſteady Principle of *fearing GOD, honour the King*; and will conſcientiouſly *render to All their Dues; Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Cuſtom to whom Cuſtom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour.*

Such, I conceive, will be the general Conduct of a real Friend to his Country, and ſuch his Endeavours to promote Its true Intereſt: Induced thereto *for* his *Brethren and Companions' ſakes*, and *becauſe of the Houſe of the LORD our GOD*: In ſhort, by every Motive that can engage His Zeal, as He is a Social or a Religious Being; as He is a Man or a Chriſtian.

To conclude. Our Obligations to *Pray for the Peace of* our Jeruſalem and to *Seek Its Good*, are at all Times many and powerful, but more particularly urgent in critical Conjunctures; and it is peculiarly becoming, on *This* Day, for our *Tribes to go up, even the*

Tribes of the LORD, to the Teſtimony of Iſrael, *to give Thanks unto the Name of the LORD.*—But then, in order to render our Devotions conſiſtent, and our Endeavours uniform, we muſt rectify every Thing amiſs in our Tempers; *mortifying* in particular thoſe mean and ſelfiſh *Luſts*, or thoſe boiſterous and over-bearing Paſſions, which were the chief Occaſions of Confuſion in the Days of our Foreſathers, and which are in all Times the moſt uſual Diſturbers of Publick Tranquillity. Be it our Ambition, by an honeſt Application to the Duties of our proper Stations, to bring in our reſpective Shares toward the *Plenteouſneſs* of the Community; and, according to our ſeveral Abilities, to contribute cheerfully and loyally to the Maintenance of that Order, and the Support of that Government, on which our Freedom and our Happineſs in this World depends. Above all; by a conſtant and devout Attendance on the Worſhip and Ordinances of our *Zion*, let us ſanctify all our other Endeavours for Its *Proſperity*, and effectually recommend it to HIS Favour, *whoſe Kingdom ruleth over All.*—So ſhall our Aims for the Publick Good be rightly directed; and *GOD, even our own GOD, ſhall give us His Bleſſing.* And, when every Connection with this our Earthly Country, when *this Earth* itſelf, *ſhall be diſſolved:* We ſhall be admitted into full Poſſeſſion of [a] *our Citizenſhip*, [Πολίτευμα] our *Settlement* truly ſo called, in that *better Country, which is an heavenly*; that *Jeruſalem, which is above and is the Mother of us all: a City, that* alone *is at* perfect *Unity in Itſelf*; whence Party and Faction are for Ever excluded; where our *Selfiſh* and our *Social* Affections will be completely reconciled, becauſe infinitely ſatisfied: For *GOD ſhall be All in All!*

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[a] Compare Phil. III. 20. Heb. XI. 16. Gal. IV. 26.

THE

THE PRESENT IMPUNITY OF WICKED MEN

No ARGUMENT againſt

The JUSTICE of GOD's GOVERNMENT.

ILLUSTRATED IN

TWO SERMONS.

JEREMIAH V. 3. Part I.

O LORD, *are not thine Eyes upon the Truth?*

WE have in theſe Words a paſſionate Exclamation of the Prophet upon obſerving the *Delay* of Divine Vengeance upon impious and incorrigible Men. That Perſons of this Character ſhould betray no Signs of Regret or Uneaſineſs under Divine Chaſtiſements, but ſhould be permitted to triumph over them in Affluence and Splendour; was a Conſideration which ſeems to have dwelt much upon his Mind. *Thou haſt ſtricken them* (ſays He) *but they have not grieved:* — *They have made their Faces harder than a Rock, they have refuſed to return.* He was, in general, well ſatisfied, that the Diſpenſations of an All-perfect Being towards his rational Creatures muſt needs be agreeable to the Meaſures of *Truth* and Rectitude. And accordingly, we find him in [a] another Place acknowledging that, *the* Lord *was Righteous.* But ſtill to reconcile the Appearances of *proſperous Iniquity* and *Piety in Diſtreſs* with the Juſtice of the great Governor of the Univerſe, was an Attempt in which he found himſelf not a little embarraſſed: He deſires to talk with God *concerning His Judgments: Wherefore doth the Way of the Wicked proſper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherouſly?*

Nor was the Prophet *Jeremiah*'s Caſe ſingular in this Reſpect. The proſperous Condition of many obſtinate Sinners has in all Ages, eſpecially before the clear Diſcovery of *That Life and Immortality* which has been *brought to Light by the Goſpel,* been a mighty Stumbling-Block to many Thoughtful Men. The devout *Pſalmiſt* confeſſes, that, when [b] *He ſaw the Ungodly in ſuch Proſperity, his Feet were almoſt gone, his Treadings had well-nigh ſlipt:* And again, after a long Enumeration of their various Succeſſes: *Lo, Theſe are the Ungodly! Theſe proſper in the World, and Theſe have Riches in Poſſeſſion! And I ſaid, then have I cleanſed mine Heart in vain,—and waſhed mine Hands in Innocency!* So again, the Prophet *Habbakuk* could not but conclude from His Notions of the Divine Nature and Attributes, that [a] *He muſt be of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, or look on Iniquity* without Indignation and Abhorrence: But *wherefore* then (ſays He) *lookeſt Thou upon them that deal treacherouſly; and holdeſt Thy Tongue while the Wicked devoureth the Man that is more Righteous than He?*

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[a] Ch. XII. 1.

[b] Pſal. LXXIII. 2, 3.

[c] Ver. 12.

Thoughts of this Kind do indeed but too naturally ariſe in the Breaſts of ſerious, and eſpecially of diſcontented Perſons. [b] "*That* "*it ſhould be well with the Righteous,* and *ill* "*with the Wicked,*" is the Voice of Reaſon, and the Voice of Revelation: And when we find it ſo frequently contradicted as it ſeems to be in Fact and Experience; though we do not preſently give up the Belief of God's Superintending Providence, nor quit our Notions of the Equity of His Dealings with Mankind; yet our Aſſent becomes weakened with Doubts and clogged with Difficulties; we are tempted to *fret ourſelves becauſe of the Ungodly,* and to cry out with the Prophet in the Text,—*O* Lord, *are not Thine Eyes upon the Truth?*

It may not therefore be improper to conſider this Matter a little more particularly; and that the Ways of Providence may be juſtified to the Reaſon of Man, that neither good Men may be dejected nor diſheartened in their Obedience, nor bad Men encouraged and hardened in their wicked Courſes; I ſhall endeavour,

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[a] Hab. I. 13.

[b] Iſai. III. 10, 11.

I. *Firſt,* To obviate the Objection againſt God's Moral Government of the World ariſing from the Delay of His Vengeance, and the preſent proſperous Condition of ſome impenitent Sinners.

II. *Secondly,* To prove more directly the Righteouſneſs of God's Government of the Moral World, and that notwithſtanding any preſent Appearances to the contrary, He will never ſuffer Perſeverance in Goodneſs to remain finally unrewarded, nor Impenitence in Wickedneſs to eſcape finally unpuniſhed. And then

III. *Thirdly,* To conclude with a few uſeful Inferences for the Regulation of our Conduct, ariſing from the preſent Subject.

But before I proceed to obviate the Objection againſt God's Moral Government of the World ariſing from the Delay of His Vengeance, and the preſent proſperous Condition of ſome impenitent Sinners, let me premiſe a neceſſary *Caution*, and ſuch as was never more ſeaſonable than at preſent againſt too great Forwardneſs in examining, and eſpecially too great Preſumption in cenſuring the Ways of Providence. It is become faſhionable for Men to ſpeak with the ſame Familiarity of GOD's Methods of Acting, as if They were of His Council, or *He were ſuch an one as Themſelves*: to pronounce peremptorily and deciſively, in what Manner He *muſt* act, in any given Caſe; and that if He ſhould not ſo act, He would proceed *arbitrarily* and *unjuſtly*. Strange Preſumption this, in *Creatures of a Day!* who ſcarce take in the *minuteſt Part* of the Scheme of providence, and yet pretend to paſs Sentence upon the *whole* of it! I will not point out any other Inſtances of this Kind, of which the Vanity of the human Mind, is but too unhappily productive; even in direct Oppoſition to the Word of GOD. But, to go no farther than the Caſe before us. Here the Difficulty proceeds on Suppoſition of ſome unequal Allotment of Mens *Conditions* and Circumſtances to their real *Characters*: And yet, with regard both to the real Characters and to the Conditions of particular Perſons, we are always *liable to Miſtakes*, and are often wholly *igno-*

rant. Mens Characters are of ſo complicated a Nature, and are capable of ſo many Diſguiſes, that They may often appear in a Light very different to that unerring Judge [a] *who looketh on the Heart*, from that in which they are viewed by us who can *ſee no farther than the outward Appearance*. And as to Mens Conditions or Circumſtances, [b] *who knoweth what is*, upon the whole, *Good for a Man in this Life?* who can tell, whether the ſame Diſpenſation which we place to the Account of Proſperity may not *really* be a Snare and a Curſe? or whether what we look upon as a ſore Calamity may not, by Him who views it *in its whole Extent*, be graciouſly intended for, and finally rendered a Bleſſing.—In a Caſe then, wherein we are ignorant of ſo many Things, the Knowledge of which is neceſſary to our forming an exact Judgment, it muſt very ill become us to pronounce raſhly, or to [c] *let our Mouth be haſty to utter any Thing* againſt the Divine Proceedings: GOD *is in Heaven and* we *upon Earth*; *therefore* ſhould *our Words*, of this Kind eſpecially, *be few*.

However I ſpeak not this in order to evade the Difficulty which I have undertaken to obviate. Let it be ſuppoſed, as it cannot indeed be denied, that ſome Good Men (Good, I mean, in ſuch a Senſe as any frail Mortals can be ſaid to be ſuch) are as miſerable, and ſome Bad Men, as happy as the outward Circumſtances of this Life can render either of them reſpectively. Yet GOD *has not left Himſelf without Witneſs*, in the Inſtance now under our Conſideration: Even we, ſhort-ſighted as we are, can yet aſſign ſeveral good Reaſons for the Diſpenſation before us. But as it is needleſs to urge *all* the Reaſons that might be mentioned on this Occaſion, I ſhall only enlarge upon theſe three following;

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[a] Sam. XXVI. 7. [b] Eccl. VI. 12. [c] Eccl. V. 2.

1. That the Proſperity of wicked Men in *ſome* Inſtances is an *unavoidable Conſequence of the preſent State of Things*, and particularly of *Man*.

2. That the *immediate* Puniſhment of wicked Men in *all* Caſes would be *inconſiſtent with the Rewardableneſs, if not the very Being of Human Virtue*. And

3. That ſuch an exemplary Vengeance, preſently inflicted, would, as Matters now ſtand, be *inconſiſtent with the Happineſs even of Good Men*.

1. As to the firſt of theſe, let it be noted, that by *Proſperity* I here mean not ſo much

the *inward Enjoyment* as the *outward Poſſeſſion* of the Good Things of Life. And how neceſſary a Conſequence it is of the preſent State of Things that *ſome* Wicked Men ſhould be in *ſuch Proſperity*, will not need many Words to evince it.

'Tis obvious to obſerve, that, as long as human Nature continues the ſame it now is, ſome Men will by an ill Uſe of their Freedom oppreſs and defraud others. And, as long as the Nature of Things is the ſame, ſuch Oppreſſion and Fraud ſhall be attended, at leaſt, in ſome Inſtances, with the Riches and Proſperity of the Oppreſſor, and the Poverty and Want of the oppreſſed. Caſes of this Nature may more frequently be expected, if it be conſidered, that wicked Men extend their Views no farther than the preſent Life, and may therefore be ſuppoſed deſirous to *make the moſt of it*: beſides that they have gained ſo compleat a Maſtery over Reaſon and Conſcience, as to be under few or no Reſtraints in Worldly Purſuits. Now ſuch Men muſt, in the ordinary Courſe of Things at leaſt, ſometimes ſucceed in their Purſuits after this World's Goods; and that too in Prejudice of Thoſe, whoſe Principles reſtrain them from any indirect Methods of ſeeking them, and whoſe exalted Views raiſe them far above any great Concern about either the getting or the keeping of them. And to expect that ſuch Perſons ſhould in *no Inſtances proſper*, would be to expect that either the *Laws of Nature* ſhould be continually *ſuſpended*, or that the *Freedom of Man's Will* in determining His Actions ſhould be *deſtroyed*.

I would, however, by no Means here, be underſtood to inſinuate, that God has ſo far put the Diſpoſal of Men's Affairs, or the Succeſs of their Purſuits, out of His own Hands as to leave Himſelf no Power of interfering with, no Right of ſuperintendence over them. No. [a] *He that ſtilleth the Raging of the Sea, and the Noiſe of its Waves, can* alſo whenſoever He pleaſeth, and (no doubt) often *doth* ſet ſuch *Bounds to the Fury of the Oppreſſor as it cannot paſs*. And ſhould We at any Time [b] *ſee the Oppreſſion of the Poor, and violent perverting of Judgment and Juſtice in a Province*; We muſt *not marvel at the Matter*; but may reſt ſatisfied that *He that is higher than the higheſt regardeth, and that there be higher than They*. But then, that He ſhould *on all Occaſions* interpoſe, *always* prevent Thoſe Evils, which Man by an ill Uſe of His Freedom will bring upon Himſelf or His Fellow-Creatures; that is, that He ſhould firſt eſtabliſh a regular Connexion between Actions and their Effects, and then *conſtantly* ſuſpend Theſe Laws of His own framing; or that He ſhould firſt give Man a Freedom of Acting and then render it of no Uſe by conſtantly over-ruling it: This is ſuch a Proceeding, as the Attributes of GOD are ſo far from *requiring*, that (if we have *any juſt* Notions about them) they cannot *admit* of it.

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[a] Pſal. LXV. 7.

[b] Eccl. V. 8.

The Truth is, [a] *Time and Chance* favourable Opportunities or unfavourable Accidents, *happen to all worldly Affairs*; GOD having wiſely ſo ordered Matters, that no human Methods of purſuing the Good Things of This World ſhall be *abſolutely infallible*. The Evils which Good Men ſuffer, and the Succeſſes which Bad Men enjoy, ſeem indeed, many of them, rather *permitted* than *ordered* by Providence. And if We conſider the ungovernable Deſires and Paſſions of ſome, and the defenceleſs Condition of others; inſtead of entertaining hard Thoughts of GOD for permittng *ſome* Inſtances of Proſperous Villany, We ſhall ſee Reaſon to adore His Goodneſs for permitting *no more*.

But perhaps it will be ſaid, "All This "may be very true, in the preſent State of

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[a] Ecc. IX. 11.

“ Human Affairs, and 'tis the very *Thing complained of that it is ſo.* But might not a “ Being of infinite Wiſdom, who certainly “ foreſaw This Conſequence, have ordered “ Matters otherwiſe from the Beginning?” — If ſuch preſumptuous Queſtions deſerve an Anſwer, They may receive a *ſufficient* one, if it can be ſhewn,

2. That the immediate Puniſhment of Wicked Men in every Inſtance, would be *inconſiſtent with the Rewardableneſs, if not the very Being of Human Virtue.*

By Human Virtue I here underſtand that Conformity of Temper and Behaviour to Truth and Right which is ſuited to Man's preſent State of Diſcipline and Tryal. For as to That unſinning Holineſs which will be Man's Portion in his future glorified State (which is indeed to be a State of Reward not of Probation) I ſay not that a Removal of all Temptation would leſſen its Excellency and Perfection. But the Rewardableneſs of Man's Virtue, in his preſent probationary State, muſt (as far as We can form any Notion of Rewardableneſs) depend upon its being Matter of Choice and ſome Degree at leaſt of Difficulty and Self-denial. And, as we ſhould think it unreaſonable to be puniſhed for ſuch Actions or Omiſſions as were the neceſſary

Reſult of ſome Force or Compulſion laid upon Us: So would it be equally unreaſonable to hope to be rewarded for any ſuch Actions or Omiſſions as proceed not from our free and unconſtrained Option and Approbation of them.

Nor let it be ſuppoſed, that This Obſervation is applicable to the Caſe of Phyſical or outward Force and Compulſion only: ſince it will be found in great Meaſure true in relation to ſuch Reſtraints or over-bearing Motives as influence, in a Moral, but ſcarce more reſiſtible Manner. I am very far from thinking that *all* Moral Motives are inconſiſtent with the Freedom of Man's Choice. Yet certain it is, that They may be ſo circumſtanced as to amount to little leſs than an irreſiſtible Conſtraint, and to leave as little Room for any commendable or rewardable Choice as Phyſical Force itſelf would leave for it.

For let us conſider, what we mean by Phyſical or outward Force: Namely, ſuch a Force upon a Man's external Powers, the Powers of his Body, as makes it naturally impoſſible for him to do ſuch an Action. But ſurely, ſuch Motives may be ſuppoſed as ſhall lay a like Reſtraint upon the internal Powers of his Mind, as ſhall render it morally impoſſible for him to make ſuch a Choice. By the *Former* a Man is rendered incapable of *acting* in ſuch a Manner; by the *Latter*, he is left *at Liberty to act* ſo, if He *will*; but then He is rendered incapable of *willing* any ſuch Thing. For Inſtance: A Madman in Chains is rendered incapable of throwing himſelf down from a Precipice, by the outward Force reſtraining him: A ſober Perſon is indeed under no *ſuch* Reſtraint; He *may* do this, if He will: But then He is under a Reſtraint of *another* Kind; inaſmuch as He cannot *will* any Thing like it conſiſtently with thoſe Principles by which ſober Perſons conſtantly and uniformly conduct their Actions.

To apply this to the Caſe before us. Let us ſuppoſe any Act of Sin, as Theft or Fraud, or Oppreſſion, inſtead of ever ſucceeding ſo far as to attain its purpoſed End, were to be, by God's original Appointment or conſtant Interpoſition, as *certainly* attended with ſome exemplary Puniſhment, or even with Diſappointment, as that of a Man's throwing himſelf down from a Precipice would be with Death by the ſtanding Laws of Motion and Action in the Material World. And what would be the Conſequence? Why, Men would indeed be left at Liberty to commit ſuch Sins, if They ſhould *will* to do ſo; but then it would be morally impoſſible for them to chuſe to act in that Manner; there being, on the Suppoſition above-mentioned, no Principle in human Nature left to excite them to it. And what Rewardableneſs could there be in reſtraining from Sin upon ſuch Terms? Juſt the ſame there is in a ſober Perſon's refraining from the Act above ſpecified, (that of caſting himſelf headlong from a dangerous Precipice) that is, *None at all.*

What has been here ſaid amounts to this. Should God in this Life *ſever the Wicked from the Juſt,* and conſtantly *ſend Darkneſs upon Thoſe whilſt Theſe had Light in their Dwellings*; ſhould He ſuffer no Act of Iniquity to proſper, much leſs to eſcape without an immediate Puniſhment: We may, indeed, preſume, that Vice being ſo eminently diſcountenanced, would have but few Votaries; and Virtue (if our beſt Actions could in *ſuch* Circumſtances deſerve that Name) would become popular and faſhionable. But then, what *Glory is it,* if we keep never ſo cloſe to our Duty whilſt we are under a Moral Neceſſity of doing ſo? as we muſt be if there is no Room for any Temptation to recommend a Deviation from it?

Accordingly, in the preſent wiſe Diſpoſition of Things, we are left to the Influence of *rational* Motives: Our Obedience is now a *reaſonable Service*; a Service, which is, not only in regard of its own Nature, but of the Principles upon which we perform it, *perfect Freedom*. *Godlineſs* has indeed [a] *the Promiſe of the Life that now is*, as well as *of that which is to come*; and this Promiſe is ſufficiently fulfilled to *perſuade* a *rational* Choice. At the ſame Time, however, the outward Advantages of this Life are not ſo *conſtantly* annexed, ſo *wholly* confined, to the Practice of our Duty, but that they *are capable* of being ſet in Competition with it: And if They *may* ſometimes be obtained by an Adherence to Virtue, They *muſt* alſo ſometimes be parted with for the ſake of it. 'Tis true, even in this Caſe, Virtue and Piety have Advantages *infallibly* annexed to them, which when fairly propoſed and duly attended to, muſt appear infinitely preferable to any Thing we can forego for the Sake of them: But ſtill theſe Advantages are *out of Sight*, and are generally conſidered as at ſome Diſtance from us; whilſt the Good Things of this Life are always *preſent* with us, always *ſoliciting* us. A conſidering Mind might, indeed, eaſily conclude, that what is

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[a] 1 Tim. IV. 8.

certainly future will, one Time or other, be *as certainly preſent :* Yet he muſt be a Stranger to Mankind who ſhall imagine, that ſuch a Conſideration will always and unavoidably have its due Influence. It requires more Thought than Men are willing to exert, to to give Preſence to Futurity, and (in this Senſe) *to call the Things that are not, as though they were.* Something, therefore, is requiſite on our Part, in order to give to the Rewards of Virtue, and the Wages of Sin, thoſe of them (I mean) which are *abſolutely* and *infallibly* annexed to each, their due Weight and Efficacy: Our Minds are to be kept in a proper Situation to diſcern and ſubmit to their real Moment and Importance. And as the doing this has ſomething *Voluntary* in it, it will alſo (we may humbly hope) *be acceptable with* God.

Add to all this, that many Moral Virtues, many Chriſtian Graces, owe their *Exerciſe*, their very *Being*, to the Diſpoſal of Things we are here vindicating. Should God in this Life *reward every Man according to His Works*; ſhould He *cauſe His Sun to ſhine only on the Good*, and *His Clouds to drop Fatneſs only on the Dwellings of the Righteous*; What would become of all thoſe ſhining Qualities of Courage and Conſtancy, of Patience and

Perſeverance, of Affiance and Reſignation? *Our Hope* would then, in the Apoſtle's Expreſſion, *be not Hope*; and our Faith, of which ſo *many excellent Things are ſpoken*, muſt loſe the Province in which it diſplays itſelf with moſt Advantage, that of *overcoming the World.*

With how little Reaſon then is the Proſperity of Wicked Men in This Life made an Objection againſt the Wiſdom of God's Adminiſtration, when ſo many wiſe Ends of Providence are ſerved by it, and when without ſome Inſtances of This Nature, there could be no Room for Freedom of Choice, and by Conſequence for Moral Good or Evil, Virtue or Vice, in the World! — But,

3. An exact Retribution of Vengeance here would be impracticable, becauſe, as Matters now ſtand, it would be *inconſiſtent with the Happineſs of Good Men.*

For (not to inſiſt on the Conſideration, how unable the very beſt of Men would be to *ſtand before* God, ſhould He be *ſo ſtrict as to mark*, and ſo ſevere as to puniſh, *every Thing that is done amiſs*; a Conſideration which, One would think, ſhould be ſufficient to make all *the Earth keep Silence before* God; not to inſiſt on This, I ſay,) it is very eaſy to ſhew, how inconſiſtent the immediate Puniſhment of profeſſedly wicked Men, in *every* Inſtance, would be with the Happineſs of Thoſe who may be called *Good* in a leſs ſtrict, I mean, in an *Evangelical* Senſe.

Every conſidering Perſon muſt have obſerved, how the Concerns and Intereſts of Good and Bad Men, with regard to Temporal Affairs, are interwoven with each other. We are placed in ſuch Circumſtances as make it neceſſary for Us to depend upon one another for Help and Aſſiſtance; and in Conſequence of That to form ourſelves into Societies. But then, ſo numerous are the Conqueſts of the Enemy of Mankind, that (according to the Apoſtle's Obſervation) if We reſolve *not in any wiſe to keep Company*, to have no Intercourſe nor Dealings, [a] *with the Fornicators of This World, or with the Covetous or Extortioners,* &c. *then muſt we needs go out of the World.* So long as We continue in it, our Intereſts muſt be frequently embarked on the ſame Bottom with Theirs, and we muſt ſuffer or rejoice together with them.

Again; the Goodneſs or Piety of the Beſt of Men is no infallible Security againſt very different Qualities in their neareſt Relations. *The Time would fail me to ſpeak of Jacob and of Aaron, of Gideon and of Eli, of David*

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[a] 1 Cor. V. 10.

alſo and Samuel, and ſeveral Holy Men recorded in Scripture, whom We find to have *had Sons that did not walk in Their Ways.* And, had Sacred Scripture been ſilent in This Particular, daily Obſervation would furniſh us with Inſtances more than enough of the ſame Kind. And can we imagine the immediate Deſtruction of the moſt profligate Perſons would leave no Uneaſineſs in the Breaſts of their ſurviving Relations, how pious and reſigned ſoever? This, I fear, is a Pitch of Reſignation too exalted for This imperfect State, and reſerved for that, *where They neither marry nor are given in Marriage*; where there is no Paſſion or Prejudice; but where all Good Men, ſhall, without Diminution of their own Happineſs, acquieſce in the juſt, tho' ſevere, Deciſions, of an impartial Judge, with regard to others.

The Truth is, as human Nature appears at preſent, the better any Man is, the more ſuſceptible is he, generally ſpeaking, of the tender Impreſſions of Pity and Uneaſineſs for the Calamities of Thoſe about Him. Were the near Relations of Good Men as Virtuous and as Proſperous as They could wiſh them to be; yet when They ſhould look *abroad* into ſuch a World as This is, They muſt find their Benevolence and Compaſſion become in ſome Meaſure *a Pain and Grief to them.* That *Goodneſs of Temper* which Chriſtianity recommends, as it makes [a] *Men rejoice with them that do rejoice,* ſo does it conſtrain them *to weep with them that weep,* and oblige Them to be in ſome Degree *afflicted in all wherein* Thoſe about them *are afflicted.*

So that, in ſhort; the immediate Puniſhment of wicked Men could not be confined to themſelves, but would in many Inſtances involve the Good and Virtuous in the ſame Calamity: And by [b] *gathering up the Tares* too haſtily *the good Wheat would* almoſt unavoidably *be rooted up alſo with them.* The Providence of God therefore ſuffers both to [c] *grow together until the Harveſt;* and, we have Reaſon to believe, frequently [d] *ſpares the Wicked* of this World purely *for the ſake of the Righteous that are therein.*

Upon the Whole then, it appears, that Thoſe hard Thoughts which ſome good Men have been apt to entertain of the Divine Diſpenſations are wholly groundleſs and unreaſonable; our preſent Circumſtances being ſuch as make an exact Diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments (as far as We are able to judge) both improper and impracticable.

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[a] Rom. XII. 15. [b] Matt. XIII. 29. [c] Ibid. 30.
[d] Gen. XVIII. 24.

Let us hence learn, to be modeſt in our Cenſures of the Divine Providence; to believe there *may be* very good Reaſons for His Methods of Acting, tho' We do not *preſently ſee them*; and, for a *full* Solution of *all* our Doubts, to *wait with Patience 'till we ſee the End.*

JEREMIAH V. 3. Part 1st.

O LORD, *are not thine Eyes upon the Truth?* —

BY *Truth* We may here underſtand *That Truth* which is ſometimes attributed to *Actions*, or *their Conformity* to Right Reaſon and the Laws of GOD; and by *the Eyes of the* LORD being *upon it*, may be meant, His having a peculiarly favourable Reſpect to thoſe that practiſe and promote it: The Providence and Inſpection of GOD is indeed *over all His Works*, being univerſal in its Extent, and deſcending to the minuteſt Particular; and in This Senſe [a] *the Eyes of the* LORD *are* ſaid to *run to and fro in the Earth beholding the Evil and the Good.* But then *His Eyes* are in a *peculiar* Manner *over the Righteous*; *They* are the Objects of His *eſpecial* Care and favourable Regard, and muſt be in a diſtinguiſhing Manner rewarded by Him.

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[a] 2 Chr. XVII. 9.

This is a Doctrine which has ever been, *in the general*, admitted by the Thinking Part of Mankind. And yet, we all know, many even good Men have been mightily perplexed by ſome Appearances not eaſily reconcileable with it, and particularly the proſperous Condition of many Wicked and incorrigible Men. The Prophet in my Text ſeems to have been in Theſe Circumſtances; and it muſt be owned, This is a Caſe, which may appear at firſt Sight attended with Difficulties. [a] *That the Righteous ſhould be as the Wicked*, muſt ſurely *be* far *from* the Appointment of *the Judge of all the Earth, a Judge who cannot but do Right*. But, *that the Righteous* ſhould be (as They frequently, at leaſt with regard to *outward* Advantages, *appear* to be) in a *much worſe Condition* than the Wicked, that whilſt the former are *deſtitute, afflicted, tormented,* the latter ſhould live in Eaſe, Affluence, and Splendor: This is a State of Things, which as We are to imagine, can never be *permitted*, much leſs *ordered*, by a Being *whoſe Eyes are upon the Truth*.

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[a] Gen. XVIII. 25.

To relieve the Mind under this Difficulty, and in ſome Meaſure to vindicate the Divine Proceeding in the Caſe before us, I have endeavoured, in ſome former Conſiderations upon this Subject, to ſhew, that there are ſeveral *very good Reaſons* aſſignable for the Permiſſion of ſuch a State of Things as is above ſuppoſed:—And particularly, I hope it has appeared, that the proſperous Condition of Bad Men in ſome Inſtances is but a *natural Conſequence of the preſent Conſtitution of Things*:—that if this *could* originally have been prevented, yet a more immediate and exemplary Vengeance upon Sinners in *every* Inſtance, would have been *inconſiſtent with the Rewardableneſs, if not the very Being, of Human Virtue*:—And laſtly, that ſuch an exact Retribution muſt be impracticable, as being *inconſiſtent with the Happineſs of Good Men*. However, for a *fuller* Vindication of the Divine Wiſdom, I proceed, as I propoſed, to ſhew

II. *Secondly*, That though Providence may for the preſent ſeem to take no Notice of the Good or Evil Actions of Men, yet He will by no Means ſuffer Perſeverance in the former to go *finally unrewarded*, nor *Impenitence* in the latter to eſcape *finally* unpuniſhed.

We read, that when, after St. *Paul* had miraculouſly eſcaped Shipwreck, *a Viper faſtened to His Hand*; the *Barbarians* looking upon him as under the Arreſt of Death, preſently concluded, that, *no doubt this Man was a Murtherer, whom, though he had eſcaped the Sea, yet Vengeance ſuffered not to live.* A Concluſion the more remarkable, as we find it in the Mouths of thoſe, who, probably, having received no *direct* Notices of Things by any divine *Revelation*, may on that Account be preſumed to have ſpoken the *Natural* Sentiments of Mankind. And though their Concluſion was certainly in this Inſtance wholly groundleſs, and would in any Inſtance have been too raſh and unjuſtifiable, yet it was drawn, how irregularly ſoever, from this *juſt* Principle, *That Vengeance purſues the Guilty.*

It *always* does ſo; and frequently, though not always, *overtakes* Him in the *preſent* Life. The *Pſalmiſt*, after having told us His Complaints upon the undeſerved Succeſſes of wicked and ungodly Men, proceeds to inform us, how he obtained Satisfaction in this Particular. It ſeems, He found upon further Obſervation, that [a] God *had ſet them in ſlippery Places*, in order to *caſt them down and deſtroy them*. And in another Place, *I have*

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[a] Pſal LXXIII. 18.

[a] *ſeen the Ungodly in great Power, and flouriſhing like a green Bay-Tree.* But what follows? *I went by, and lo he was gone! I ſought him—but his Place could no where be found!* Providence frequently reſerves the Wicked *unto the Day of Deſtruction*; and permits them in the mean Time to be more remarkably proſperous, that they may become more conſpicuous Monuments of His Vengeance.

'Tis an Obſervation of the wiſe Man, that *Riches gotten by Vanity,* that is, by indirect Means, *ſhall be diminiſhed.* There is a Curſe attends the Acquiſitions of Fraud and Oppreſſion, which makes *Riches,* thus acquired, *make to themſelves Wings and flee away* unaccountably and almoſt imperceptibly. [c] *As a Partridge ſitteth on Eggs and hatcheth them not,* ſaith the Prophet, *ſo He that getteth Riches and not by Right ſhall leave them in the Midſt of his Days, and at His End ſhall be a Fool.* Numerous are the Inſtances recorded in Scripture, wherein this Truth is verified: And though we are but too apt to multiply Inſtances of this Kind within our own Obſervation, yet in ſome Caſes *the Arm of* the Almighty is *ſo bare* that we cannot *but ſee it*;

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[a] Pſal. XXXVII. 35.—36.   [b] Jer. XVII. 11.

and Men's Puniſhment as well as Their Guilt ſo notorious, that we are obliged to ſay, *This hath* God *done*, and cannot but *perceive that it is His Work.*

However, *after all*, it muſt be owned that *no Man can certainly know Good or Evil from all that is before Him:* And therefore, in order to prove our Poſition fully and inconteſtibly, We are often obliged to enlarge our Proſpect, and to look forward into another Scene of Things beyond This preſent World: A Scene, in which when it ſhall be opened, all the ſeeming Irregularities of This now before Us will be fully adjuſted. *The Wicked* may, and ſometimes do, according to Holy *Job*'s Obſervation, [a] *live, become old, yea are mighty in Power: Their Seed is eſtabliſhed in their Sight, and their Offſpring before their Eyes: Their Houſes are ſafe from Fear, neither is the Rod of* God *upon them.* All This is readily owned in ſome Inſtances to be permitted, and ſuch Permiſſion has, I hope, been, conſiſtently with the Equity of Providence, in good Meaſure accounted for. But the Difficulty hence ariſing entirely vaniſhes, when We go on to enquire in His emphatical Words, [b] *What is the Hope of the Hypo-*

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[a] Job XXI. 7. [b] Job XXVII. 8.

crite, tho' he hath gained, when God *taketh away his Soul!*

That there will be *another* Life in which We ſhall be called to an Account of our Actions in *This*, is a Truth which We need hardly go out of ourſelves for a full Proof of. Every one who in the leaſt reflects upon what paſſes within him, muſt be conſcious to himſelf, that He is capable of exerting or ſuſpending His Powers of Action, that is, that he is at Liberty to act or not to act upon particular Occaſions: He muſt *feel* alſo, that He holds this Freedom dependently upon ſome ſuperiour Being, to whom He is accountable for His good or ill Uſe of it: And from His being liable to give an Account of His Actions, He can ſcarce miſs of inferring This Natural Concluſion, that He ſhall certainly, one Time or other, be called upon to give an Account of them.

Again: If no Account is to be given hereafter, whence that continual Expectation, that immoveable Apprehenſion, of a future Reckoning? whence that Joy and Satisfaction which ſpring up in a Man's Breaſt upon a Conſciouſneſs of his having acted up to the Dignity of his Nature, to the Dictates of right Reaſon, and the Obligations of Duty? whence, on the other Hand, that Gloom and

Horrour that ſits upon the Mind, whence that *fearful Looking for of Judgment*, that haunts the Privacy and diſturbs the Repoſe, of the *moſt ſecret* Sinners? Whence, I ſay, but from the great Author of our Being, who in order to ſecure our Conviction and engage our Remembrance of this moſt important Truth, has graciouſly implanted in our Breaſts theſe undoubted Preſages, theſe intimate Aſſurances of it?

If *Education* and *Cuſtom* ſhould be (as They ſometimes have been) aſſigned as the only *Cauſes* of this Appearance in the Moral World; We muſt have Leave to ſay, that ſuch *Cauſes* are far from being equal to ſuch an *Effect*. However, if They were, may We not aſk, whence ſprung This Cuſtom? or, what gave Occaſion to This Method of Education? Had They a good Foundation? or had They none? If the former, the Thing is granted that We are contending for. And ſurely, to ſay the latter is to pay a very extraordinary Compliment to That Reaſon, for the Strength and Sufficiency of which Theſe Perſons generally affect to be Advocates: it being in Effect to ſay, that this boaſted Faculty has never yet been able to get the Maſtery over Men's Prejudices and Prepoſſeſſions: But that Theſe have *univerſally* ſcared Men with a fooliſh and groundleſs Approbation of ſome Future Judgment, which their Reaſon might have told them was entirely without Foundation.

For we muſt obſerve farther, that not only the Vulgar and Ignorant, but Men of the greateſt Diſcernment and Penetration, have all along entertained a ſtrong Preſumption of an *After-Reckoning.* And if ſome lofty Pretenders to *Freedom in Thinking* would at any Time be talking big of having *trampled under Foot* the Fears of Future Puniſhment; yet a Fit of Sickneſs, or perhaps the next Flaſh of Lightning, confuted all theſe *great ſwelling Words*, and expoſed their *Vanity.* In Fact, the more thoughtful any Men have been, the more firmly they have ever found themſelves attached to this Notion; the more Uſe they have made of their Reaſon the more forcible has been their Conviction of it. But ſurely, *had* this been *a Prejudice of Education* only, it muſt ſeem ſtrange that the ſame Reaſon which enabled Men to *conquer all other* Prejudices, ſhould only *confirm them in this.* Yet this has all along been the Caſe. We muſt therefore, conclude, that the Apprehenſion of ſome Future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, is not occaſioned by Cuſtom or Education only, but founded in the Nature, and agreeable to the juſteſt Reaſon of Man.

Thus we might have argued upon *merely Rational* Principles; but We *Chriſtians* have ſtill ſtronger Aſſurances in this Affair. The Scripture-Repreſentations of GOD's Providence with Relation to Mankind are very worthy of our Obſervation. He is there figured out to us under the Repreſentation of an [a] *Houſholder, who planted a Vineyard, and let it out, and went into a far Country:* —of an [b] *Huſbandman, who ſuffered the Tares and the Good Wheat to grow together until the Time of Harveſt; but at the Time of Harveſt ſaid to the Reapers, Gather the Tares in Bundles to burn them; but gather the Wheat into my Barn;*—and laſtly, of [c] *a Lord, who gave unto His Servants Talents of different Value, and after a long Abſence came and reckoned with them.* The plain Meaning of which Repreſentations is this: That though Providence ſeems ordinarily to be *at ſome Diſtance*, as not *viſibly*, or in a *judicial* Way interpoſing in the *preſent* Life; yet that there is a Time approaching, when He will come to *reckon with us*, and make us final Allotments of Happineſs or Miſery according to our Care or our Negligence in obſerving the Inſtructions given us, and improving the *Talents* committed to our Truſt.

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[a] Matt. XXIII. [b] Idem XIII. [c] Idem XXV.

The Truth is, the Doctrine of a *Future Judgment* is one of the moſt diſtinguiſhing Doctrines of Revealed Religion, moſt frequently repeated, moſt fully explained. The Evidences of it ſhine forth in every Part of the Goſpel: And every Proof of Chriſtianity (as many irrefragable ones there are) is a Demonſtration that [a] *we muſt all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt; that every one may receive the Things done in His Body, according to that He hath done, whether it be Good or Bad.*

And certainly, this View of the Scheme of Providence is abundantly ſufficient to ſolve all the Difficulties appearing in *that ſmall Part* of it we ſee in this World. Were the Inſtances of proſperous Villany, or of diſtreſſed Innocence, more numerous than they are, yet *the Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of* God, muſt be a full Anſwer to every Objection of this Sort. The Wiſdom and Juſtice of God in permitting the Wicked [b] *ſometimes to receive their Good Things and the Righteous Evil Things* in this ſhort Life, appears fully acquitted, if we take into our Account this Conſideration, that in the Life to come, a

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[a] 2 Cor. V. 10. [b] Luke XVI. 23.

Life endleſs and a State unchangeable, *Theſe ſhall be comforted, and Thoſe tormented.*

Having now, I hope, in a good Meaſure vindicated the Diſpenſations of Providence in Relation to the Good Things of this preſent World; I proceed, as I propoſed,

III. *Thirdly* and *Laſtly*, To draw ſome uſeful *Inferences*, for the Regulation of our Lives, from what has been ſaid.—And

1. Let the promiſcuous Diſpoſal of Temporal Goods teach us to *take a juſt Eſtimate of their Worth, and to regulate our Purſuits after them accordingly.*

When the wiſe King *Solomon* had freely taſted of all the Enjoyments that this World could afford, [a] having *exceeded all the Kings of the Earth for Riches and for Subſtance*, He at laſt, very deliberately, [b] pronounces *all Things to be Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.* A true and juſt Determination this! a Determination worthy of the wiſeſt of Men. And yet perhaps, ſcarce any Thing contributed more to this His Perſuaſion, than his having obſerved that [c] *All Things came alike unto all. There is* (ſays He) *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked, to the Good and to the Clean and to the Unclean; to him that ſacrificeth and to him*

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[a] 1 Kings X. 23. [b] Eccl. I. 2, &c. [c] Idem IX. 2.

him that ſacrificeth not, &c. And then he ſubjoins: [a] *This is an Evil among all Things done under the Sun.*

This is, indeed, a Concluſion very naturally ariſing from ſuch an Obſervation. For who can be in Love with a World, of whoſe Poſſeſſions the leaſt deſerving have ſo frequently the largeſt Share; and wherein the beſt often meet with the worſt Treatment? Is it to be imagined that, if Riches and Affluence, Pomp and Grandeur were Man's *proper* Good, God's greateſt Favourites would ſo frequently be deſtitute of them? Or that a wiſe and juſt Being would ſcatter *real* Favours with an undiſtinguiſhing Hand, and make no more, nay, oftentimes leſs, Proviſion for His Friends than His Enemies?

Hence then let us learn, how little Value is ſet upon ſuch Enjoyments by the all-wiſe Diſpoſer, and conſequently how ſmall a Share of our Regard they really deſerve. If we have but a ſmall Allotment of this World's Goods, let us not be diſheartened as if we were out of God's Favour, or concerned as if we were deprived of any Thing abſolutely neceſſary to our being happy: If *the Lot be fallen to us in a fair Ground, and we have a goodly Heritage*; let us *thank the* Lord *for giving us Warning*, and be mindful of our Danger, rather than elated with our Happineſs. Let us look upon Temporal Good Things with the Indifference of *Travellers* rather than with the Acquieſcence of *Owners*; always conſidering them rather as the *proper Rewards* of our Virtue; rather as *Talents* entruſted with us by our Lord and Maſter, than as any ſure *Marks* of His *Favour*.—And this ſuggeſts to us,

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[a] Eccl. IX. 3.

2. That the promiſcuous Enjoyment of Temporal Advantages by Good and Bad Men ſhould teach us to *beware of cenſuring others raſhly on Account of the Want of them.*

The leaſt Acquaintance with Mankind will inform us, what great Need there is of this Caution, when any Diſappointment, eſpecially any remarkable Affliction, befals a Man, ſuch a Stroke occaſions many Obſervations in the Neighbourhood where it happens: How active are our Thoughts on ſuch Occaſions! How raſhly do they ſet themſelves to judge, and upon how ſlight Evidence to condemn the unhappy Sufferer! not queſtioning but [a] *this Man muſt have been a Sinner above the* reſt of His Neighbours, *becauſe He has ſuffered ſuch Things.*

But now, if (as we have ſeen) the beſt of Men have their Calamities as well as the worſt, how groundleſs muſt ſuch Cenſures oftentimes be! When we daily obſerve that [a] *there are Wicked Men to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Righteous, and Good Men to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Wicked*; to take our Eſtimate of any Man's Sins merely from His Sufferings, muſt ſurely be a Practice highly abſurd and irrational. If we will take our Bleſſed [b] *Saviour*'s Advice, the Uſe we ſhall make of other Mens Calamities will be very different from this: Inſtead of concluding the unhappy Sufferers to have been Sinners above their Neighbours. We ſhall be induced ourſelves *to repent, leſt we likewiſe periſh.*

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[a] Luk. XVIII. 2.

Let us not then judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that every Man ſearch and try His own Ways, and turn unto the Lord. This we ſhall all find to be a Work as difficult as 'tis neceſſary: Our own *Hearts* will prove *deceitful* and *wicked* enough to employ our moſt diligent Reſearches. We ſhall find little Leiſure to *judge our Brother*, and leſs Inclination to [c] *ſet at naught our Brother*, if we purſue this Reflection to its proper Conſequences,—*That we muſt all ſtand before the Judgment-Seat of CHRIST!*—And this brings me to infer

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[a] Eccl. VIII. 14. [b] Luk. XIII. 3. [c] Rom. XIV. 10.

3. From the Certainty of a Future Judgment, how *poor an Encouragement preſent Impunity is for Continuance in Sin.*

And yet, an Encouragement it is (we all know) but too powerful and prevailing. The Young Sinner ſteps forward in the Paths of Sin with Diffidence and Heſitation. His corrupt Inclinations are as yet but weak; and his Apprehenſions of Danger ſtrong: And if he put forth his Hand and take of the forbidden Fruit, he taſtes of it *with Fear and Trembling.* But when he finds it not only *delightful to the Eye* and *ſweet* to the *Taſte*, but that his Eating of it is not attended with any immediate bitter Conſequences: 'tis then He ventures to *repeat* the forbidden, but harmleſs, Repaſt, [a] *to hide it under his Tongue* as a ſweet Morſel, and to *feed himſelf without Fear.* Thus [b] *becauſe Sentence againſt an Evil Work is not executed ſpeedily, the Heart of the Sons of Men becomes*, by Degrees, *fully ſet in them to do Evil.* Repeated Provocations and repeated Eſcapes make them flatter themſelves there is nothing ſo formidable in the Vengeance they have hitherto been awed by, as they were taught to imagine; till, arrived at the higheſt Pitch of Impiety, they cry out, *Tuſh,*

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[a] Eccl. VIII. 11.

[b] Pſal. X. 11.

God *hath forgotten*; [a] *He hideth away His Face, and He will never ſee it!*

[b] *But, take Heed, ye unwiſe among the People! Oh! Ye Fools, when will Ye underſtand?* [c] *He that planted the Ear, ſhall He not hear? or He that made the Eye, ſhall He not ſee? He that nurtureth the Heathen (it is He that teacheth Man Knowledge) ſhall He not puniſh?* Undoubtedly He will: And will take Vengeance on Thoſe moſt eſpecially whom His *Long-Suffering cannot lead unto Repentance*; who, becauſe *He holds his Tongue, and does not* ſpeedily *reprove them and ſet before them the Things that* They *have done*, do therefore *think wickedly, that He is even ſuch a* ſhort-ſighted, weak, and partial Being *as themſelves.*

Say not then, "[d] *I have ſinned, and what* "*Harm hath happened to me?*" *For the* Lord, how *long ſuffering* ſoever, *will in no wiſe let thee go.* Divine Vengeance will ſooner or later, overtake every impenitent Sinner; and then, ſuch an one will find but ſmall Comfort from that Forbearance which encouraged him to *treaſure up Wrath againſt the Day of Wrath.* That Vengeance will not then be thought to have been long in coming, which when once come, is to laſt *for Ever!* But,

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a Pſal. XCIV. 8, 9, 10. b Ibid L. 5. c Ecclus. V. 4.

4. Laſtly, Let the Aſſurance of the Reward attending Perſeverance in Righteouſneſs *fortify us againſt all Difficulties we may meet with in and for it.*

The Diſcouragements attending our Chriſtian Profeſſion are not now ſo numerous or ſo preſſing as They were in the Infancy of Chriſtianity, when Men were obliged in a more eminent Manner to [a] *paſs through much Tribulation into the Kingdom of* GOD. There is however ſtill great Occaſion to preſs the Duty of Perſeverance. Afflictions are the common Lot of the Sons of *Adam*; and the Beſt of Men are by no Means exempted from bearing a conſiderable Share of This Burthen. So far from this, that beſides the *ordinary* Difficulties that are to be encountered in our Chriſtian Warfare; ſuffering Virtue, and diſtreſſed Piety are real, nay common Caſes; and none of us can foreſee how ſoon They may be His own. So that the Beſt of Us may [b] *have need of Patience, that after we have done the Will of* GOD *we may inherit the Promiſes.* —

For (bleſſed be GOD!) Promiſes there are, *exceeding great and precious Promiſes*, which GOD who cannot lye hath made in the Goſ-

[a] Acts XIV. 22. [b] Heb. X. 36.

pel to Thoſe who [a] *by patient Continuance in Well-doing ſeek for Glory and Immortality.* To ſuch there is a [b] *Glory revealed, to which the greateſt Sufferings of the preſent Time* on one Hand, or its moſt exalted Enjoyments on the other, *are not worthy to be compared.* For ſuch there is [c] *laid up a Crown of Righteouſneſs that fadeth not away*; for ſuch there is reſerved *Fullneſs of Joy and Pleaſures for Evermore.* We are aſſured that every Calamity, we here patiently endure for Righteouſneſs-ſake, ſhall then be amply rewarded by God himſelf; and that [d] *our light Affliction which is but for a Moment worketh for Us a far more exceeding and Eternal Weight of Glory!*

And ſurely, *if we faint* under Tribulation when We have ſo glorious a Proſpect before Us, *our Strength is ſmall.* Pain and Diſquiet are, it muſt be owned, by no Means in themſelves agreeable to Fleſh and Blood. *No Chaſtiſement* or Affliction *ſeemeth for the preſent to be joyous, but grievous.* But then our Trials, how ſharp ſoever, can be but ſhort; and *Endleſs Happineſs* muſt be infinitely more than an Equivalent for all we have endured, all we

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a Rom. II. 7. b Ibid. VIII. 18. c 2 Tim. IV. 8. d 2 Cor. IV. 17.

can endure, in This World. We cannot think ourſelves hardly dealt with, when having been [a] *ſo little chaſtiſed* we ſhall be ſo *greatly rewarded.* Let [b] *the Multitude of the Sorrows we have in our Hearts be* never ſo great, yet *Theſe Comforts* muſt be abundantly ſufficient to *refreſh our Souls.* Whilſt *Heaven thus,* as it were, *opens* itſelf to our View, we cannot be under any great Concern about the Treatment we may here meet with; but muſt rather (according to St. *James's* Paradox) [c] *Count them happy which endure.*

To conclude. — We ſee what little Reaſon We have *from all that is before Us,* to doubt either of the Providence and Inſpection; or of the Juſtice and Holineſs of Almighty God. — Let us then, however Things may appear at preſent, always reſt [d] *aſſured that the Judgment of* God will finally be *according to Truth*: And in Conſequence of This Aſſurance, what Motives ſoever may at preſent appear to ſolicit, or what Proſpects ſoever may encourage us, let us never preſume to do any Thing which We have Reaſon to believe is diſpleaſing to *Him,* and which We may be ſure We ſhall, *on that Account,* ſooner or later wiſh We had *not done.* And particularly, whenſoever We are tempted to entertain unworthy Notions, of the Divine Juſtice, or to preſume upon His Forbearance, from obſerving the preſent Diſpoſal of Things; let Us (according to the Advice of the wiſe Son of *Sirach)* [a] *Remember the End, and We ſhall* neither judge nor *do amiſs.*

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[a] Wiſd. III. 5. [b] Pſal. XCIV. 19. [c] Jam. V. 11.
[d] Rom. II. 2.

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[a] Ecclus. VII. 36.

The End of the First Volume.